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# *Letters from An Old Time Salesman to His Son*

8

*By R. L. JAMES*

*General Sales Manager, Libby, McNeill & Libby*

Chicago and New York  
THE DARTNELL CORPORATION

1922  
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## C O N T E N T S

### PAGE

The Boy Starts Out—Green and Gullible but Full of “Pep”	9
The Boy Writes That He Has Arrived as a “Regular” Salesman .....	13
The Boy Thinks the House Should Accept Cancellations	17
The Boy Has Been Promoted to a “Special” Salesman.....	21
Dad Gives the Boy Some Sound Advice Regarding Team Work .....	25
The Boy Is Having His Troubles as a Branch Manager.....	31
Dad Tells the Boy Why It Pays to Advertise.....	37
Dad Counsels the Boy to Throw Away His Knickers and Put on Long Pants .....	43
The Boy Has Begun to Solicit Dad’s Counsel .....	49
The Boy Has Told Dad of His Latest Pet “Peeve”.....	55
The Boy Has Met the Girl—He Sounds Dad Out on Matrimony .....	61
The Boy Has Been Bragging a Little .....	67
Dad Warns of the Evil Spirit That Whispers “You Haven’t Time” .....	75
The Boy is Given an Unfailing Formula for Landing a Bigger Job .....	81
Hal Is District Manager Now—His Problem Is Winning the Respect of Men .....	87
Dad Drops in on a Branch Manager and Finds the Spirit of the Time .....	93
The Boy Gets a Chance to See Himself as Others See Him	99
Dad Tips Off the Boy to a New Job .....	105
Dad Gets a Lesson from a Trip to the Farm.....	111
Dad Takes an Interest in the Boy’s Big Sales Contest.....	117
Dad Surrenders When the Boy Lands the Big Job.....	123



## *The Story Behind These Letters*

**T**HE most refreshing thing about these letters is that they are real letters, written by a real salesman to a real son. Therein they differ from so many books of this character. There is a certain satisfaction in knowing that what you are reading was written by a man who has been through the mill.

Another refreshing thing about these letters is that they were not written for publication. The motive behind them is an interesting one. Mr. James began his business career as a salesman, calling on the retail trade in small towns. Shortly after a son came to bless his home—a red-headed boy who was christened "Hal." Like all men who make a success of their profession, Mr. James believed in his work and his dreams of the future for his son always pictured the boy as a traveling salesman. As the boy grew and developed traits of character, what was more natural than that his dad, who shared the boy's problems, should visualize his son with these same peculiar traits running afoul of the same pitfalls and snags that beset the path of every young man in sales work? What was more natural than that he should try to impart to his boy the secrets of his success as a salesman and manager of salesmen, so that the son might use the father's achievement as a short cut?

Through some underground avenue, best known to himself, it came to the attention of the editor of the Libby house-organ that Mr. James—then a department manager—was writing a series of most interesting human letters to his boy. After much persuasion Mr. James agreed to the anonymous publication of these letters—with deletions of a personal character—in the Libby salesman's bulletin. For two years the letters of an old time salesman to his son were the most eagerly read feature of one of the most readable of salesmen's publications.

After the letters had run the gamut from salesman to general sales manager, during the writing of which the author himself had risen to the position of General Sales Manager of his Company, they came to an end. That they had exerted a powerful influence in moulding the character of every Libby salesman there can be no question. No man could read the letters without being the better for having done so. And I feel that Mr. James in permitting the publication of them in book form, so that the message they carry may be spread out beyond the limited confines of the Libby organization and conveyed to every man who sells things, has taken a big step toward fulfilling the obligation which every man owes to his profession. If every salesman could read this book it would do more for the cause of better, cleaner salesmanship than any other one thing.

J. C. ASPLEY,  
*Editor, "Sales Management Magazine."*

## THE TRAVELING MAN



How many of you remember the golden days of yore  
When you were an uncouth urchin hanging 'round the village store,  
When the loafers saved the country—changed the tariff every day  
'Mid the fumes of various mixtures of tobacco-labeled hay,  
How you forgot the colored candles and the tempting cookie can  
When the door was quickly opened and in walked the Traveling Man.

'Member how some way or other conversation seemed to stop,  
When he opened up his samples and your eyes would fairly pop  
At experiences he related as he took his order down,  
Talked about a three-ring circus—he was better than a clown,  
How you wondered and you worshiped and resolved to break each ban  
That would keep you from becoming, some day too, a Traveling Man.

Never seemed he ever worried, life to him was always bright  
For you'd seen him in the morning and you'd seen him late at night:  
Altho' he was always working you could always see his smile  
Wasn't put on—just came natural, catchy, bubbling all the while;  
You resolved to be just like him, now deny it if you can,  
Your day dreams were filled with longing just to be a Traveling Man.

Years have passed—you've lived to see all your boyhood dreams come true  
And now you're doing daily all the things he used to do;  
Now you know he had his troubles which he smiled thru right along,  
But it makes your memory dearer—that his life was not all song;  
And like him you keep a-hustling, glad that you have joined the clan  
That begets true admiration—Here's to you, A Traveling Man!

—R. L. James



## *The Boy Starts Out—Green and Gullible But Full of Pep*

Dear Hal:

Your letter written as you had just finished your first week as a cub salesman was received and I've enjoyed reading it over, two or three times, because it brings out the fact that after all, the game doesn't change a great deal in fundamentals since the time I used to beat the brush.

I notice that you're impressed with the fact that it was pretty easy for the regular salesman Ryan to sell goods, and that you think he's a wonderful salesman. Now, of course, I never met Ryan and I don't doubt from what you say that he is fairly popular with the trade, knows the line and is a hard worker, but from some of the things you say, I'm not exactly sure that Ryan is the man who wrote the first book on salesmanship, but, of course, I may be mistaken. With all due respect to Ryan, you must remember that your company was manufacturing and marketing food products long before Ryan was strong enough to shake a rattle.

Now, I'm not trying to belittle the honest sales effort of yourself or your friend Ryan in the least,

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

but I just want to be sure that you appreciate the fact that your success last week wasn't due 100 per cent to the siren voice of your salesmanship, but that a great big piece of credit was due to the solid foundation on which you were building your sales.

I notice you sort of "bragged" over the fact that you sold only the *best merchants* in each town and those who were capable of giving orders worth while. If I had to take my choice between five nice new ten dollar bills and five old ragged ones, why, of course, I'd choose the crinkly kind, but if there wasn't any law against my getting both piles, I don't think I'd be so particular, because it has been my experience that the ragged ones can be changed into just as many dimes and quarters as the new ones, and either one is acceptable to the receiving teller when you pass the little black book under the wicket on Saturday.

Now the matter of choice in selling retailers is just the same. With a line like your company has, in the first place you should attempt to place it in a big way in the best stores in the town, but there isn't any game law against selling it to the little fellow around the corner, is there? Nobody in "the house" ever told you to beware of selling the small merchant, did they? You bet they didn't! In fact, every successful business has been founded on the small customer, who afterward grew into the big one. You know when Marshall Field first started in business

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

his store didn't cover a city block, but I suppose there were some two and three-quarters per cent salesmen in those days who thought Field's business was too small to bother with, but if any of those salesmen are still living you can probably find them now acting as a nurse-girl to a wheezy taxicab.

Notice you say Ryan told you the reason he didn't call on some merchants was because there was no use — they couldn't be sold. I'll never forget, the fellow who broke me in as a salesman told me the same thing my first week as we were getting off a train in a little Missouri town that had only two stores in it. He said that the one customer we sold there was the much better merchant of the two and it was no use to go near the other one.

Well, I believed him, and made my one call in the town regularly and received the one order and thought I was doing pretty well until one day, when I called, my customer informed me that he had just sold out to the other merchant across the street and that henceforth there would be only one store there.

Of course, I went over and tried to sell the other fellow, but he naturally wondered why I'd never called before and I didn't have any very good answer. The result was that I was beaten by my own stupidity and I had to call on that fellow for six months before I ever scratched an order book.

Now that is only one of many instances I could tell you, but I've found that there is one thing that,

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

as a salesman, you must never take another man's word for and that is that So-and-So across the street, or around the corner, will not buy. I've always found it a safe rule to call on every man who had his door unlocked and the worst thing that ever happened to me in applying the rule, was to get an occasional turn-down, while I have had the surprise of my life many times, to see what big orders you could get out of a little store.

The longer you sell goods, the more you'll realize that it's a battle from start to finish, but just take it from the old man that you'll have more luck capturing an increase in salary at the end of the year with a whole army of little dough-boy customers on your list than you will by trying to impress the boss with a giant named Goliath who is a single-footer.

Your loving,

“DAD.”

## *The Boy Writes That He Has Arrived as a "Regular" Salesman*

Dear Hal:—

Your mother and I have just finished reading your last letter, and while I realize that you may be getting pretty well fed up on my letters, I cannot help commenting on some of the things you have written about.

I imagine it is just about as much fun for you to get one of my letters as holding a horse in a rain. You probably look on them as containing the proverbial "good advice." I can almost hear you saying more men have starved to death on good advice than were ever killed on the field of battle.

All of that I'll admit, but words from an old traveler of the road you've just started on is a good deal like castor oil—you kick up a lot of fuss if you have to take it when you're young, but as you grow older you realize that it didn't hurt you a bit and in most cases prolonged the life of your "engine."

I notice that you have gone just far enough in the selling game to discover that your goods are higher priced than every competitor's; the merchants over-

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

loaded; business on the bum; the office manager a crab; the credit man hard-boiled and the plant unappreciative of what a salesman is up against.

Well—now, isn't that just too bad! But doesn't it occur to you that with everything so badly messed up, it is strange that the firm continues to worry along and pay dividends on its stock, year after year? Of course, the buyer tells you your prices are too high—otherwise he wouldn't be the buyer, but would more probably be rolling barrels of salt around in the basement for a living—you don't expect him to ask you to add a little to the price, do you? And man alive!—if the goods would sell themselves your company could replace you with a post-card.

Last, but not least, they thought best to hire a 1922 model eight-cylinder salesman, like you (you scamp) instead of trying to get by with a two-cylinder flivver that isn't a self-starter.

Business is bum, eh? I'm sorry you told me because that's the cry of the quitter and I hate to think you would make a phonograph record of yourself. Business is bad for some people all the time and similarly, business is good for others most of the time. Now I'm willing to admit, understand, that there are business lulls in all lines, but if you'll trace back the origin of that expression, I'll wager you'll find the thought was first expressed by one of those hotel lobby lizards who got used to the buyer

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

hunting him up during the recent period of big demand and small supply. To the fellow who really loves the game (and if you don't you shouldn't be in it) the changed conditions, or the lull, if you prefer that name, only means more "turndowns" which can be overcome by "more calls" and at the end of the day, he finds he's been too busy to notice that lull and his order-book may reflect smaller orders, but gee—he's got a lot of 'em!

And the Office Manager's a crab; and the credit man hardboiled;—well now, what do you think of that! Of course, the Office Manager should be a mind-reader and overlook it when you send in claims without the proper information, or reports only half-filled out, but somehow or other he isn't—no, he's just human like all the rest of us—has a lot to do and the company don't pay him for "guessing" at things you do.

The credit man is another good friend and a salesman's safety valve. Both of 'em are the easiest men in the world to get popular with, but you have to do your share and come clean. Sloppy reports and incorrect information may be the easiest way out for the moment, but they never fool these "watch dogs of the exchequer," and after all, if it were not for them, your pay check wouldn't come out so regularly.

Now you're wrong again, when you think the plant superintendent doesn't appreciate your problems. He gives them really more thought than you do, for

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

you have only one house to work with, while he has to try to answer the demands of six hundred salesmen.

Now, Old Top, I expect you think I have stepped on you pretty hard in this letter, but I haven't intended to. If you weren't my own boy, I imagine I'd expect less of you, but it's pretty hard for the old man, knowing that a great big red-headed human dynamo, with hair on his upper lip, would bear even the earmarks of a whiner, not to appeal to your better judgment by making fun of the petty trials that every red-blooded salesman has gone through and graduated from, just like you got over the nursing bottle, measles and mumps.

But, anyway—read this letter twice, then remember, I'm laying a little bet on you and am anxious to get your next letter.

Your loving

“DAD.”

## *The Boy Thinks the House Should Accept Cancellations*

Dear Hal:

For the past few months I have allowed your mother to do all the letter-writing from this end; in fact, Mother has become a pretty important factor around here since she has been given the vote. She insists that the home be in her name and my insurance in her name, so I've consented, and further allowed her to carry my religion in her name.

My chief reason for not writing sooner is that I wanted to wait until you had graduated into a "jobbing" salesman, because I knew you would eventually do so, and that with the new job would come new problems to talk about.

Yes, the jobbing game is quite a little different from selling the retailer, and I am glad to note that you have already found that the average jobber buyer is generally a pretty thorough business man, quite cold and calculating, and is more susceptible to quality and price than he is to a salesman's personality, funny stories or the odor of "moonshine."

Note you say you think that your company is making a mistake in not accepting cancellations of con-

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

tracts with certain of their jobbing customers who have been pretty hard hit on sugar declines, and that you're afraid your company will not do much business with those customers again, on account of refusing to "accommodate" them.

Say—Boy—just how do you get that way?

You think your company should bear "part" of the load, eh? You know one trouble with you aggressive, red-blooded, two-fisted "kids" (as you'll always be to me, Red) is that you don't look backward or forward far enough.

Now let's look back a little. 'Way back last Spring your company came out with their opening prices on the goods they sell for Fall Delivery. On account, primarily, of the experience of the Wholesale Grocers over a long period of years, these jobbers bought, and why? Because they wanted to assure themselves of your company's quality and against the possibility of an advance in cost after the goods were packed. That was their reason and now, why did your company contract? Because they wanted to assure themselves of a market for a certain per cent of their pack so that their operations would not be so speculative.

You know, no business that is purely speculative is fundamentally sound.

Now this contract arrangement between your company and the jobber was not philanthropic on

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

either side. For years this custom has existed in the industry and has been found to be fashioned along the lines of sound economics. It is not a one-sided proposition by any means, for, if it were, it would not have obtained over all these years. Sometimes it has worked to the advantage of the canners, but just as often it has worked to the advantage of the jobber, depending entirely on conditions beyond the control of either. While both canners and jobbers may have been laying up treasures in heaven for years, neither has so far had sufficient prestige with the management to cause the rain, sun and frost to act just right for the proper development of fruit and vegetables, but under the contract system, both are protected as far as possible to be fair to both parties.

Now, Red, remember the entire commercial fabric of our nation is built up on confidence, and confidence can obtain only just so long as the integrity of the business world is maintained by the recognition of the validity of a contract entered into in good faith between buyers and sellers.

All right—now this year, as usual, after making these contracts with their wholesale grocer friends, your company invested its money in tin cans, sugar, boxes, other supplies and materials, contracted for acreage, labor and everything else, bought a large amount of their supplies long before they really needed them, but they must necessarily take no

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

chances on failure. They borrowed money at prevailing high rates to finance it.

Now listen, son, do you remember when you were about nine years old, you wanted me to buy you a shot gun and a lot of other fool-killer arrangements, and you thought I was awfully hard-hearted because I wouldn't get 'em for you? I would have liked to have gratified your desires, but, boy—it wasn't good business. So, also, the cancellations—your company would like to "accommodate" their friends by canceling their contracts if it would help them, but it isn't good business. If they did so, they would be morally bound to cancel every contract, if requested, because they should not do it for a few unless willing to do it for all—they must treat all alike.

You know, everyone admires liberality, and similarly, most people like to be liberal, but don't get away from the fact that in business you can be liberal only up to a certain point, and after that it becomes damfoolishness; and don't worry about losing the friendship of the customer requesting cancellation. Any business man will admire you for being a business man instead of a jelly-fish. He knows he has no good business reason for expecting you to cancel and, son, you'll always make more friends than enemies when you've the nerve to stand up under fire when you're in the right.

Your loving

"DAD."

## *The Boy Has Been Promoted to a “Special” Salesman*

Dear Hal:

Yes, I will admit that it begins to look like I never write you any more except when you get a promotion, but I wouldn't advise you to figure on that too closely, because sometimes I'm liable to fool you.

As a matter of fact I'm not much for writing letters except when I have something to say, and when you were a little fellow I found that while you were susceptible to suggestions and advice, you were very quick to resent overdoses, so I've come to look on my letters a good deal like beef extract—a little of it in a whole cup of hot water is a nice thing, but no one relishes the idea of consuming a sixteen-ounce jar at one sitting.

I was interested in your announcement that you had been appointed a “special representative” and will travel out of Chicago doing missionary work. I wonder if you used that word “missionary” advisedly, or if it merely dropped out as a careless expression. Regardless of that, I'm sure you used the right word, for as I understand it, that's just

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

exactly what a "special representative" should be, but I am wondering if you are sure you really understand the full meaning of the word.

The usual adaptation of the word "missionary" as used in business circles is, "one who is sent out to generate, extend and foster business and all things pertaining thereto, on a certain product."

Now, the same relative difference exists between a salesman and a "special representative" as does between a common or garden variety of preacher and a missionary, but the big trouble is a great many people fail to analyze that difference, which accounts for so many failures in the ranks of special representatives and church missionaries.

Now, if you'll go to the trouble to drop around theoretically, to a "Home for Indigent (sounds like 'indiligent,' don't it?) Business and Religious Missionary Failures," you'd find after talking with Exhibit A and B their ideas of a missionary are a sort of a combination hand-shaking, chicken-eating, solicitous, dignified, well-dressed hombre, who sort of exhaled good will and felicitations, who didn't have any duties in particular, but just traveled around "for the good of the cause." And, of course, it goes without saying that that's the reason why they're inmates of the Home.

It's true that a missionary is a sort of super-salesman, but it means "salesman plus" rather than "graduate salesman."

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

A real missionary goes into the highways and by-ways; as the old fisherman says, "he ketches 'em where they ain't." He generates enthusiasm in the salesmen he comes in contact with; his sales work is educational; he sets an example for industry, sales ability, loyalty; he teaches the salesman to use superior judgment in not selling too little or too much to a customer; he irons out petty difficulties; he's an exponent of the sales theory that contemplates holding your head up, but not so high as to let a lot of little orders go by under your nose without seeing them. Yet withal, he is humility personified, which is the true mark of a great man.

Now, son, don't tell me that I'm only telling you stuff that you already know—of course, you know it—but what I want to know, do you capitalize that knowledge one hundred per cent?

Just remember, Red, when you go out on these new jobs, there's a Wrong Way and a Right Way. You've traveled the road far enough to be able to distinguish the sign posts. While the Boss and Dad cannot see everything you do, it's reflected in the results, boy; it's reflected in the results!

Your loving

"DAD."



## *Dad Gives the Boy Some Sound Advice Regarding Team Work*

Dear Hal:

When Mother read me your letter announcing that you had at last been appointed a Branch House Manager, as well as your comments on just what it meant to you, I thought I'd take time tonight to unburden myself of some of my views in that connection, that might be interesting to you at a time when you were just starting the new work.

I am wondering if you fully appreciate the difference in your position from a standpoint of responsibility.

Up to now, you have been working entirely for someone else and while you are still subject to considerable supervision, in addition thereto, you will now have others under your supervision—working under you.

Of course, you've been through the different stages of your company selling and around branch houses long enough to have a good working idea of the general routine of the work and I don't doubt at all, but what you will handle that end of your work in good shape, but right now, at the start, boy, let's

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

look at the bigger, broader things that are expected of you.

One of the first things that will impress you is just how poor a salesman Smith is, over in the East territory and what great weaknesses that new man over South is already demonstrating. Your hands will just fairly itch to grab hold and do it all yourself, in your own way, which, of course, you think is the only way, but *WHAO*—throw on the emergency, Old Top, you're skidding! You're a hustler all right and a good man, which you admit yourself, but, boy, you just cannot spread yourself out over the whole territory and run the branch too, and again, if your company had wanted you to do all the selling they'd have told you so.

No, your job is to teach and lead others to do most of the selling, reserving only the hard-boiled and nursing-bottle customers that the other boys cannot land, or for some reason seem to avoid.

I want to bear down a little on that remark "teach and lead." You know, back in the old days before Bryan ever ran for President, which is longer than you can remember, the popular belief was that the best way to get the best results out of a man on any job was for the Boss to be sort of a mixture of Simon Legree, pyrotechnic cuss-words, bar-room sarcasm and "*Drill ye Terriers, Drill*" policy, but thanks to a revolutionary era which was directed by common hog-sense, instead of the kind that the

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

butcher buys in five pound pails, that kind of man-management has been tabooed.

Yes, I know—I know there are a lot of things you're not going to stand for and you're all right in it too. There are a lot of things you shouldn't stand for, as a Manager, but what I'm talking about, Red, is the best way to go about to correct them.

Before you sit down and dictate that red hot, phosphorous, steaming, sizzling letter to Hulbert on account of the way he emphasized his unfortunate displacement of bone, where gray matter should be, stop a minute, Red, close your eyes a minute and let this picture come back. Remember when you were new, when you were beating the brush?—you got in that town that's always a Jonah; was raining and had been all week; the farmers weren't paying their bills; it was inventory time and it just seemed like every merchant you called on was just a little more grouchy than the last; no one wanted your goods, and after working hard all day in the rain and snow, you ended up at a so-called hotel that made you think of the Biltmore—it was so different!

You were hungry, but after a glance at the greasy fried potatoes, a pork chop burned to a cinder and the inevitable bread pudding, you just swallowed the lump in your throat and called it a meal? After sitting around the lobby making out a few reports and listening to the senseless patter of a dumb-bell in a checked suit and a pink tie, you took your little

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

pitcher with the broken handle, filled it at the faucet and went up to a sea-going bed that humped up in the middle like William S. Hart's pet broncho?

Remember, Red, how you worried yourself to sleep—sick of the whole bloomin' mess, but determined that if others could succeed, you could? You got up in the morning, shaved in ice water, but stuck out your chin and strode to the dining room? Remember the gum-chewing waitress whom someone had told she looked like Theda Bara, who brought in a murky glass of water and exclaimed in a breath, "Steakham liver'n bacon an' how'd you want yer aigs?" You wouldn't have known the coffee if it hadn't been in a cup, but you picked around like an old hen and sauntered out into the lobby still unbeaten when the fresh squirt behind the register handed you three letters.

Ah, Red—how you smiled! The first one was written in a round girlish hand and told of the good time she was planning with you when you got back to "headquarters." The next one was written in an old-fashioned hand, now a little scrawly and nervous from age, but it carried the "mother message" of hope and pride in the success she knew was bound to come to "her boy." Things weren't so black after all—you'd show those hard-shell merchants you would. You were almost normal when you opened the last letter, which from the envelope you knew was from "the Boss." It read—"Why don't you send

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

us some orders—we didn't send you out to write up weather reports; we don't pay your salary to allow you to loll in good hotels. Unless you do better next week, we'll have to make a change."

Bam! How'd you feel, Red? Now, honest—hasn't it happened to you? Did it fill you full of pep and enthusiasm and cause you to go out and just knock the cover off the ball? You bet it didn't and such things never will. That kind of letter was written by a graduate hack-driver, not a real man manager.

Now, Red, listen—you were made Branch Manager because of your experience, not alone in the product—not alone in selling, but experience in Life. Your company thinks you have seen so much of conditions that you know how to "help" the weaker brother over the rough places. Teach 'em, Red, lead 'em! The only place for a driver is on the south end of a pair of mules. A kind word here, a helpful suggestion there, will make your men want to take off their coats to help you, boy, and it is the cheapest way in the world to buy loyalty.

And Red, don't spend all your time telling the other fellow how to do it. All men are not "from Missouri," but the "show me" method carries a healthier kick than volumes of sales talks.

You're going to be a busy man in the new job, boy, but Mother and I have decided now that we're glad we didn't insist on your finishing your musical

LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

education, for some day we know you'll be a Sales Manager and I tell Mother that if she had her way, you would now be playing the snare drum in a jazz orchestra.

Let's go, boy, let's go!

Your loving

“DAD.”

## *The Boy Is Having His Troubles as a Branch Manager*

Dear Hal:

Mother and I received your letter several days ago and I have given quite some thought to the problems you mention, because I wanted to advise you right, if at all.

Note you say you are not meeting with the success you expected to, in your present campaign and you attribute it to several causes, among them a consumers' hunger strike, conservative buying and lack of effort on the part of the salesmen.

Well—now, of course, the Old Man may not know as much about it as you do, but from several other statements you made in your letter, I'm wondering if you have really struck the *real reason*.

I don't want to misjudge you, boy, but those reasons you give are becoming so much of a chestnut to me—I've heard 'em so often that I'm pretty sure I know their origin. I know that during the holidays—just before Christmas—you could hear those records being played on almost any talking machine that you cared to listen to, but I thought surely, with the coming of the New Year you'd forget the

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

“Stove League Chatter” and chase “Old Man Gloom” out into the sunshine.

You know, I’m reminded of a fellow I used to know when I wore knee breeches. Tom Foreman was a boy who was raised in our town and who never knew what it was to run off to go swimming, rob a melon patch or play hookey. His folks always dressed him nice and he was a fair student in school, but he never batted over about a hundred and twenty-six in the back alley league, so, of course, there was no farewell reception tendered him by “the gang” when his folks decided to send him away to college.

Tom would come back to town for vacations for a brief visit, but somehow or other his schooling didn’t seem to humanize him any and each time he came he seemed to be just a little more “upnish” than the time before, but he was very fond of airing his superior wisdom—sort of casting his pearls before swine, as it were, even though we didn’t give him any encores.

In this particular vicinity the only game that was available was a few cotton-tails and an occasional Jack Rabbit in the winter time, so that hunting had become a lost art and the sportively inclined always looked to some other sort of amusement.

We never knew exactly how it happened, but it seemed like the boys of the Eata Bita Pie Fraternity

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

or whatever it was, got to talking about hunting big game over their pipes one night and Tom suddenly developed one of his bright ideas which had been heretofore extinct and he took to bragging to his fellow pie-biters about the exceptionally good hunting that was available in the vicinity of his old home town. Although this was in the days before prohibition, Tom had never seriously gone in for tonsil irrigation, yet it must have been something that made him wax eloquent, for the first thing we knew he had brought four embryo captains of industry down to our town, all dressed up like a Roosevelt African party and they announced their intention of going out on a big hunt. Tom, of course, was too learned to ask any of the home-guard any questions, so they started out one spring morning in full regalia.

The boys caused quite a little excitement among the fellows whose full dress uniform consisted of a canvas cap with a coffee advertisement printed on it, a pair of overalls and a fifty-cent shirt, but we held that excitement in bounds until they came home in the evening. Of course, we never knew the grawsome details, but along about seven o'clock that night, the hunting party returned. The total bag of the day consisted of three ground squirrels, a hawk, one rabbit and Lafe Benson's tom-cat—and say, you should have heard the profane vocabulary that those city chaps spilled every time Tom came near them.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Of course, Tom was their host and all that and they had to end their remarks with an apology, but to sit around and listen you couldn't help but gather the idea that Tom graded a good deal lower than water goods in fruits, when they classified him as a huntsman.

Now, I just mention this story in passing, because it brings out the fact that Tom and his party hadn't analyzed the situation. Their intentions were good and they had plenty of equipment, but the dumb-bell that was leading the party, Tom, hadn't given the matter any thought and had no definite plan. He was just hoping that through some miracle all the game for miles around would just come up and plead to be shot.

You know, Red, some Branch House Managers employ similar tactics. They have the product, the samples, the salesmen and the enthusiasm, but they don't analyze the possibilities—they don't compare the sales with the available prospects in a territory—they allow their salesmen to take a turn-down from a buyer who should buy big, without attempting to make another trial. You know an amateur hunter sometimes shoots into a flock of ducks and wings a couple and you can sometimes stick a shotgun under a corncrib and pull the trigger without looking and maybe kill a rabbit, but the thinking hunter sees the game and does his best to pick 'em off, one by one, and generally comes in at night with

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

a full bag. A manager who allows his salesmen to come out of a town that has five prospects, with two orders and three excuses, hasn't *taught 'em* right.

The hunger strike was in Ireland—Red—not in your territory! Conservative buying can be overcome, by not being a conservative seller—*SELL MORE OF 'EM and OFTENER.*

Your salesmen's effort will not worry you if you don't waste it—direct 'em, Boy, *ANALYZE—HAVE A PLAN!*

Remember, if your next letter don't tell of your being a top-notcher in your campaign, it's going to hurt the pride of

Your loving

“DAD.”



## *Dad Tells the Boy Why It Pays to Advertise*

Dear Hal:

The letter Mother and I received from you just last night proved very interesting to me and I've been thinking about it all day, for you unconsciously wrote quite an essay on advertising.

From the general tone of your letter, I imagine that you have not given any serious consideration to the many ramifications of advertising and the true meaning of the word, for you seem to think that those in charge of your business have a brother-in-law in the advertising game whom they have to support and that therefore, they're spending a lot of money uselessly, that they had better put into salesmen's salaries.

Now, I'm not an advertising expert, or very much up on the line of argument that a real advertising man would turn loose on you under similar circumstances. All I know about it has been learned in just the old-fashioned school of common-sense plus what I see around me every day and I am more than surprised to think that a red-headed scamp with horn-

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

rimmed goggles couldn't see certain signs as clearly as I do.

You seem to have the idea that because your line of goods is the finest thing in cans on the market, and has been so for fifty years, that the world and some parts of Missouri know it, never will forget it and chant it as an ode before breakfast every morning and that therefore, the constant advertising that your company keeps up is all unnecessary. I further gather that you think the glib tongues of yourself and salesmen, plus the glibness of your predecessors are entirely responsible for the business you enjoy.

Now, I'm not denying for an instant the insistent urge of the contents of the can on the appetite of the consumers or the efforts—*Real Sales Efforts*—of the hard-hitting salesmen on your company's payroll, both now and in the by-gone days, but I would like you to appreciate that those things were nothing more than **ADVERTISING** and the other kind of advertising that you are talking about is but another form that augments the other and that all of it working together has been able to produce this present result and to attempt to minimize the effect of any of it is as foolish as the argument of the backwoods hill billy who argued against giving his son an education because he had never had one.

Now, Red, you've traveled some and still do and I wonder if you ever got acquainted with that black

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

bound book with the red edges that lies on the table in most hotel rooms. On the back of the book is a picture of a water-pitcher and underneath it says something about being placed there by the Gideon Society and if you ever looked in it, you'd find it was that (almost obsolete to some salesmen) gem of literature known as The Holy Bible. No, I'm not starting to preach—fact is, preachers are not the only ones who read the Bible. I'll admit that it isn't always as lively reading as Ade or Ibanez, but strange as it may seem to you, you heathen, this Book is not only found in hotel rooms, but on the reading desks of our best citizens—and there's a reason.

You know, Red, the Bible isn't an old moth-eaten account of prehistoric people, as some might think, but it really contains some of the best business stories that you can pick up.

Speaking again of advertising, if you'll just open up that Book the next time you're in a hotel room, or can borrow one from the neighbors, turn to the latter part of the Book of Genesis and begin to read about Joseph. For fear you will not get to your hotel room from the pool hall soon enough, or your own Bible is in the trunk in the storeroom, I'll just tell you about it.

It seems that this fellow Joseph was kind of a hard luck individual in the early days and he got off on the wrong foot with his brethren and was sold

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

into bondage and carried down into Egypt. He sparred around in Egypt for several years, just like lots of others do in these days, without being taken very seriously—sort of working the retail trade, as it were, when by some clever bit of personal advertising, like stepping on a fellow's foot or something, he got acquainted with Pharaoh, who was the Woodrow Wilson of the party in power at that time. It seems that Pharaoh had some kind of a dream (this same thing still happens you know) and Joe had the good Fortune to be allowed to interpret it. He predicted that there would be a famine in the land following several years of plenty and he sold the idea to Pharaoh so well that Pharaoh set up a Food Administration and appointed Joseph as the Herbert Hoover of it and he immediately started a corner on the grain market.

Well, to make a long story short—Joe had the right "dope" and just as he predicted there was a famine fell upon the land, but due to Joseph's foresight, which was unhampered by politicians, there was plenty of food for all and Joe became a great man. Joseph's brothers who had mistreated him when he wore knee pants, came down to see him and brought Dad along and they were quite surprised to find him the Big Noise in Egypt, but they were hungry.

Now, Joe had been raised right—was a decent sort of chap and all that, so he welcomed them and

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

persuaded 'em to go back and bring the rest of the "gang." They did so and the first thing they knew Egypt looked like Coney Island on Sunday afternoon—just full of Jews, and the people treated them fine because they were Joseph's relatives.

Then, if you'll skip on to the first few verses in Exodus, you'll find a sentence that speaks volumes. It says "And there arose a new king in the land who knew not Joseph." Now, get that Red—"There arose a new king in the land who knew not Joseph." What can be plainer than that? Did you ever hear a better advertising argument? You see, Joseph got to thinking just like you talk—he thought he didn't need ADVERTISING.

The rest of the story goes on to tell how the Jews fell in popular favor—they failed to keep their name, their merits and their accomplishments before the people and a new king arose who knew not Joseph.

Now I only tell you this story in passing and tell it in the language I do because it's the only language you seem to understand. There are lots of other good stories in the Bible—dig 'em out Red—they're good for you.

Boy, listen! Advertising doesn't mean just so much printer's ink in the newspapers, or magazines. That's the most familiar form and it's necessary and produces big, but there are other kinds. You know the majority of your trade never knew the founders

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

of your company personally. When they think of your company they think of you. You're the point of contact. What kind of an advertisement are you for the firm? Did you ever think of the responsibility you are carrying as a manager of your company? Do you know that every move, every letter you write, every position you take means that you are portraying your company to someone?

In business a new king arises in the land every day. There's a new retail grocer—a new jobber—or jobber's buyer on a thousand corners. They know not Joseph—regardless of how good your product is, or how long you've been on the territory, IT TAKES ADVERTISING TO PUT YOU ACROSS IN A BIG WAY.

I'm going to bed, Red, hoping I haven't bored you. Just remember that the Old Man is always hoping that your personal label means as much as the label on your company's can—if it does—ADVERTISE.

Your loving

“DAD.”

## *Dad Counsels the Boy to Throw Away His Knickers and Put on Long Pants*

Dear Hal:—

Mother just finished reading your last letter aloud to me and while I know my quick reply will sort of shock you, I cannot help but unload a few pet ideas I have along the lines suggested in your letter.

If the proverbial innocent bystander, or casual observer were to pick up your letter in the street and would take it seriously (which I don't) he'd certainly pick you up as hopeless, for the whole wail of your letter, in criticising the way the home office is handling you in particular and the sales organization in general, reminds me so much of the kind and constructive verbal barrage that a Republican Senator lays down every time a Democratic colleague intimates in public that his party won the World War.

A little over a week ago, I found time hanging a little heavily on my hands so I thought I'd take a run out to the Stock Yards and visit a little in your company's office. I don't know why I did it—guess it was a little touch of parental pride, or sentiment that must have come over me and I thought I'd go out and let 'em kid me along about that red-headed son

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

of mine. Anyway, knowing them so well out there, I thought I'd enjoy the trip and I wasn't disappointed. Things have changed quite a little since my time, but if I'm any judge they haven't forgotten the Old Man's admonition to "*keep up the quality*" not only in the product, but also in the caliber of the men who are running the business from the "boss" himself, clear down to the office boy.

Then I sat down at the boss' desk and just as I expected he had some very nice things to say about you which, of course, were hard to take. After talking to him as long as I thought I dared, I went over and sat down at the desk where all the General Sales Department mail was being sorted and I summoned up enough courage to ask to see the open files they had with you. Don't know why I did it—guess it was just because I was curious to see how well you handled things and I suppose they thought they'd gratify an old man's whim by allowing it—anyway, they handed me a big bunch of correspondence and I went over and sat down in one of the private offices so I could digest it.

The first letter I picked up from the pile ran something like this, "Attached please find a letter from Salesman Hooiszis, asking that we purchase an automobile. What do you want to do with it?" And, as I expected, the salesman's letter was typical of what could be expected from your letter. It merely said he "thought" he could get more busi-

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

ness working with an automobile than he could by walking—no data—no estimates—no logical reasons, in fact no nothing on which anyone could base an intelligent opinion as to whether the request was justified.

Then I picked up another one of your letters that ran something like this, "Salesman I. M. Whatshisname was sick all of last week. Please advise if I shall pay him or not." A flat statement with no recommendation as to what action you, as a Manager, would like taken.

Then I picked up a third letter that ran a good deal like this, "We have on hand twenty-eight Christmas Boxes which we have been unable to sell. No doubt some of the other houses have a market for them. Will you not please give us disposition."

By the time I got through with that, Red, I'll confess I had mingled emotions. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. I wondered if they were framing up on me to give my pride a jolt and I looked out the door at the two men who handled those letters—noticed the bald spots on their heads, the wrinkles beginning to show around their eyes and the gray commencing to come around the temples and, Red—on the level, boy, I didn't wonder.

I couldn't help but think of the story of the long suffering Job or how the songs and stories of the centuries have told of the long suffering patience of Mother Love and I'll confess I couldn't figure it

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

out, for those fellows didn't have the appearance of the Job I'd had described to me, nor did they resemble doting mammas, so I gathered up the bunch of letters, red in the face I'll admit, and went out and asked one of 'em how in the double-jointed, concentrated essence of modern profanity they managed to reconcile their keeping you on the payroll after writing such letters as those first three. He looked at 'em, scratched his bald spot, smiled—think of it, Red, (you red-headed pepper-box) smiled when I was all ready for the thirty-second degree of apoplexy and said, "Well, Dad, the only trouble with you is that you quit after reading the first three." Then he took up the rest, one by one, and showed me stuff that gradually brought me down to earth.

He showed me a dozen along the same line and ended up by saying, "You see, Dad, Red is a pretty good boy after all—it wasn't very long ago that he was made Manager and he sometimes overlooks the fact that more is now expected of him and we'll admit that some of his letters do smack of the kindergarten, but he's sensible and we're trying to teach him that we employ Managers to come to us *with* a decision or recommendation, not *for* one; something that we can approve or show him why it is impractical. In other words, to *think for us*, not we for him. And again, we are trying to pound through that red pate of his that stock he has is *his* responsibility—must be moved in his territory—not shipped to a more aggressive brother Manager.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

"Don't you worry, Dad, Red has his faults, but he'll grow up."

So I left, Red, feeling that your company was a little more tolerant than I would be and I guess after all, I'll have to take some of the blame for your last letter, in that you're my son, but when I read that letter of yours—full of criticism, but strangely minus suggestions—I couldn't help mutter, "Take off the rompers, boy, take 'em off—get on the long pants—you're a big boy now."

Just remember—anyone can criticize, but the boy with the sensible suggestion for improvement and the definite logical recommendation, doesn't have to sit on the bench when they play the World's Series.

Goodnight Red—think it over.

Your loving  
"DAD."



## *The Boy Has Begun to Solicit Dad's Counsel*

Dear Hal :

Your last letter made me happier than I can begin to tell you. In it you related some of your problems and really *asked* advice. I was beginning to think you are getting "fed up" on my unsolicited counsel but feel complimented to know you now want more of it.

But, leaving the personal side out of it, you know, Red, the smart man is the one who collects ideas from every one he meets, separates the wheat from the chaff and then capitalizes them, and it's a sincere pleasure for me to know that you've at last arrived at the age when you are big enough to admit that when brains were passed around you didn't get all of 'em.

So you're wondering what's the matter with your salesmen, eh ? They don't seem to take things seriously and worry whether they get business or not— always looking forward to pay-day and that's all— eh, what ? All right — your description of their attitude is so good that I believe I know just where the trouble is.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

I suppose you were too young at the time to get the lesson, but, Red, your case reminds me of something that used to happen regularly when you were a little boy. Do you remember years ago when you used to have that brindle pup? He wasn't much to look at—had no pedigree, or anything, but was just plain dog—the kind whose only excuse for living was that he was a playmate of a freckle-faced, red-headed boy. Well, anyway, the little girl next door had a cat for a pet, if you'll remember. Similarly to the dog, the cat hadn't taken any blue ribbons and about the only thing she did worth mentioning now, at least, was to notify the family that claimed her, ever so often, that she was the proud mother of a mess, and I say it advisedly, Red, a mess of kittens.

But the Boss of the house didn't appreciate her being so prolific—not being as interested in cat farms as our old friend Charlie Emery. So ever so often, while you and the neighbor girl were out to a toddle party, her father and myself would sneak down in their basement, ostensibly to look over the last sad remnants of his private stock (which is speaking in an unknown tongue to you now), but primarily to increase the mortality list of the cat specie by holding each kitten in the bottom of a pail of water until eight of their proverbial nine lives had taken flight for cat heaven.

Now, Spud, your pup and Puss, the mother cat, were never what you might call affinities. Even

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

though the two families with whom they were living were always close friends, the same measure of respect and esteem was not shared by Spud and Puss. As a result, every time Spud would spy Puss in the backyard he'd let out a mongrel yelp and start for her with the obvious intention of annihilating her.

Now the thing that used to impress me about this almost daily scene was that when Puss didn't have any kittens—no family responsibilities, as it were—when Spud rushed for her she'd turn tail and do a double-quick for the nearest tree, registering all the fear and retiring qualities that we come to expect in the female of the species.

But when Puss had kittens, still undrowned, particularly when she was enjoying a siesta in their presence, Spud could make his flying start with all the gusto and bluff that is common to cur tactics, but when he arrived at the point of contact Puss would bow her back, never budge an inch and show all the courage of the early Spartans. The result, of course, was that on such occasions the fun was all out of the game for Spud and he was clearly "sold" on the proposition that Puss could not be bluffed, and he'd beat a hasty retreat before getting within paw-length of the confident Puss.

Now, Red, that's all there is to the story, except the *moral*. Just consider the salient points. Same dog, same cat, same backyard, but different performance. Why, Red, why? Ah!—you've got it, I

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

know. *Inspiration*—that's it—that's the word. Puss with kittens had an inspiration that Puss without them didn't have.

Now, boy, take this lesson right home with you and apply it to your own problem. What your salesmen lack is *inspiration*, and you're the little doctor with the hypodermic to give it to 'em. Of course, it doesn't apply literally, even though some people do claim that the man with the big family has as many more reasons as he has mouths to feed, why he should make a success, but—I don't mean it that way, Red—I don't mean it that way. You must teach your men to *speak and feel* about *your company* as "We," not as "the house."

Any man with a single spark of ambition should look forward to an eventual goal, considerably farther than the weekly pay-check. His permanency on their pay-roll and the advancement he should hope to merit, depends entirely upon the combined efforts of the company family. His success is their success, and without favorable results neither he, nor they, can prosper.

*Teach 'em, Red—show 'em their responsibility!* Fire their minds and hearts with the fact that they're not working for the company—bless your heart, boy, they *are* the company to all intent and purpose on their territory, and either their lackadaisical or their aggressive, businesslike demeanor and actions will be interpreted by their trade exactly

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

as they appear and the company will be so reflected. And when you tell 'em, Red, be sure that the *enthusiasm* you have, which as you know, is the fuse that ignites *opportunity*, is showing in your eyes, your face and is reflected from your heart. *Enthusiasm—Inspiration*. Ah! Red, it's contagious—show 'em how proud you are to say "We"—show 'em that it's a privilege to be a part of an organization that holds the place it does in the firmament of a big business. *Sell 'em the company idea first*—then sell 'em the line.

After that, Red, if I'm not mistaken, you'll have 'em sitting on the edge of the chair, rarin' to go, filled with the kind of red-blooded courage that has made American ideas and American ideals a synonym for accomplishment.

If you sell your salesmen all that, Old Top, and keep 'em sold by your living example, I don't think you'll have to worry about the results they turn in. If that doesn't work, then the Old Man's experience with human nature is a failure and he'll be disappointed in his own judgment and the ability of his fire-brand son.

Keep me posted—I like it.

Your loving

"DAD."



## *The Boy Has Told Dad of His Latest Pet "Peeve"*

Dear Hal:

Mother and I have a lot of fun before we open each of your letters, speculating on whether or not you're going to tell us of some unusual accomplishment, or air a pet peeve. So far, the peeves you've aired have been so imaginary that we have enjoyed them just as much as your successes, so don't harbor the thought that we'd attempt to discourage your letter-writing style for a moment. In fact, Mother thinks that my chief enjoyment these days is giving you advice in answer to the problems you mention and I guess she's not so far off, at that—Mother never is, you know.

So you're all "het up" and about ready to quit over the fact that the boss has put a "District Manager" or "General Man" over you, eh? You're not going to stand for all this "supervision;" if you're not capable of running your branch and working direct with Chicago, you want to know it—eh? And especially, do you want 'em to know that you're every bit as capable as the fellow they picked out as your so-called superior—and just where do they get

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

all these new-fangled notions about supervision. Of course, Mr. So and So is a nice fellow personally, but you just don't intend to be bossed by anyone except the General Sales Manager himself and this and that, and this and that, and this and that!!! Whew! Gee! but our cat's got a long tail.

You know, Red, really you furnish me a lot of amusement. All I have to do to thoroughly enjoy myself after reading a letter like yours is to light up an old jimmy-pipe, get in the old arm chair, close my eyes and live over again the old days when you were a little shaver about nine years old. Whenever that white-headed brother of yours would get into a game of marbles or a checker game with you and Junior would begin to get a little the best of you, you'd throw one of those red-headed, temperamental fits of yours, kick over the checker-board, throw away your marbles, toss that vermillion mane in the air, chew up a couple of lead pencils and swear by all the by-laws of Huckelberry Finn and Tom Sawyer that you'd be tetotally dod-buttered and ding-busted if you'd ever play a game with him again.

The amusing part about it, Red, was that it was only a brain storm that I used to attribute to your general fiery disposition, for in less than five minutes you'd forgotten all the vindictive utterances and were playing with the brother again just as sweet and happy as you please.

Yes, it was funny, Boy, and I used to get many a

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

good laugh, but Red, when you put one of 'em on paper at your age, I'll have to admit the only way I get a laugh is to try to think of you as a kid. As a kid, it was truly laughable, but for a fellow as big and as old as you are now—**LONG PANTS**—hair on your upper lip and wearing a vest n'everything—on the level Red, you're as funny as an epileptic fit—you're pitiful!

Now listen, Old Top, before you make up your mind to walk out and leave the company lying on its back gasping—just sit down a minute and let's talk this over. You've got all the confidence in the world in the "Big Boss" haven't you? You think pretty well of his judgment and wouldn't put yours up as being superior to it for a minute, now would you? Of course not! Now just let this thought ooze into that corrugated cast-iron brain of yours—your company isn't running a peanut stand any more—they might have been small enough one day when the Boss himself could put up the window-shades and sweep out the office every night, but that time has passed, Boy, that day is gone.

Admitting that, doesn't it occur to you that the Boss has to have a little help in running the business? No one ever made a success of any business if he didn't attend to it; if he didn't know what was going on all the time. You'd think anyone a lunatic who expected you to sell all the goods handled through your branch, deliver them yourself and do

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

all the billing. You'd say it just couldn't be done, which is true and then you'd go on and sketch how you'd organize a force to do all of it with your help, of course, and you'd know what's going on every minute.

All right—now doesn't it dawn on you that you are expecting the Big Boss to be as ridiculous as the suggestion about your doing all the work in your branch, when you voice those one-quarter of one percent sentiments, criticising him for calling in help to handle a far more complex problem than your little unit?

The General Sales Manager of a company like yours, which does business in all parts of the world, has a pretty big task cut out for him. You may be a conscientious, intelligent, hard-working manager, but you're human, Red, and being human, you're not always one hundred per cent right and it's his job to know all about you and the way you're handling your business, all the time. You're not foolish enough to think he can keep in as close touch as would be necessary to know all these things, with scores of branches, are you? Of course not! Well, all right then, just how is he going to do it? You know the answer just as well as I do—so granting that help is necessary and that he has to have someone to be his "eyes" in the field—who's going to do it and what would YOU call the position? The answer is obvious—he must have "District Managers" and if you

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

were the Boss just who would you pick as a District Manager? I know just what you're going to say, so I'll say it first. Of course, he could pick the oldest managers on the force—and their experience would make good District Managers of them—mind you, but that would be wishing an awful hard job on those old fellows who deserve to take it easier than they could on a District Manager's job. The older managers have arrived at a place in life where they don't want to spend fifteen nights out of thirty on a Pullman and you cannot blame 'em.

The District Manager's title may sound awfully nice, but it's no flowery bed of ease, Red, believe me. All right then, if that's impractical, what is the answer? I'll tell you—they pick men who have had a broad experience in the game; men who have had good reputations as good housekeepers; men who know how to analyze branch house expense as well as sales results; men who are so constituted that they can give REAL HELP to a manager who is intelligent enough to use the experience and advice that is thus afforded. It's no reflection against your intelligence and ability to have one of 'em over you—why bless your old red-headed soul, the only man in this life who don't need supervision, that I know of, is a wooden Indian in front of a cigar store. He's bolted down—no brains—just a wooden man! Why even the officers of a company have supervision in the board of directors and back of the board are the stockholders, and boy, they're some supervisors.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

And Red, don't let anyone of human intelligence overhear you question the ability of the man supervising—don't you know when you do that, you're questioning the judgment of the Big Boss himself and Boy, you mustn't do that because you're old enough to know better. Just put this in your pipe, Old Top, anybody nowadays who's holding a job that requires ability, has got it tucked away around his system some place, I'll admit that sometimes it's pretty hard for a youngster to see, but it's there, Boy, it's there. Some day you'll be a District Manager if you'll just quit standing on your own foot.

After thinking over what I've said, if you still feel like you did when you wrote your letter, go ahead and send in your resignation—they'll accept it and not pass any dividends either. I'm hoping however, that your letter was just a recurrence of one of your childish temperamental fits and if so, I'll laugh at it just like I used to. If not, I suppose I'll have to go down and try and find a job for you driving a hack, so please don't make it hard for

Your Loving  
"DAD."

## *The Boy Has Met the Girl—He Sounds Dad Out on Matrimony*

Dear Hal:—

Mother and I have had several executive sessions since receiving your last letter, and you can well imagine that I've received a lot of "advice" from her as to just how to answer it, but it's no use—the Good Lord so constituted me that I have to "speak right out in meeting" if at all, so if I'm going to advise you along the line you requested, I've just got to tell you how I feel about it without reservation, so here goes!

You didn't tell us much in your letter about how far this affair of yours had gone and it makes it a little difficult on that account. You talk like there's nothing "serious" yet and that you're just wondering about certain "features" of Life's greatest adventure. Well, I hope you're not kidding the "old man," for I'm too old a bird to know that if you're all through with the overture, prologue and the medley of popular airs between the first and second act, that it's too late for me to try and break up the party, so if you're telling me the truth, the few words of advice I'll give may fall on fertile ground,

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

but if not, Boy, it may sting a little, but anyway, you've brought it on yourself, as Delilah remarked to Sampson when he started the rough house in the Temple.

I have half a notion to send your letter back to you just to show you how little you really told us about Her. About all I've been able to gather, after reading your letter about five times, is that she's about the finest thing in petticoats that ever wielded a lipstick; comes from "an awfully old and respected family;" is the only child; has been raised a pet; is beautiful and accomplished (presume you mean by that, she can dress herself with the assistance of a couple of maids) and her "old man" has oodles of money. Hump! somehow that description don't thrill me a bit!

Now, Red, before you begin to get red above the collar-band, just let me say in passing that I don't mean anything personal about the girl at all—she cannot help it because she's that way, and there's just a chance that I've got her all wrong. No doubt she's all you said about her and then some, but if she is, I'm just wondering if you accidentally picked up a white chip on the floor, or just how you came to get a hand in the game?

Not that there's anything about it that isn't good enough for anyone of that description—no—far be it from me, Red, to run down the quality of your personal line, but your description doesn't mean any-

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

thing to a fellow who has lived long enough to know that there's something more to this life than moonlight and honeysuckle. I can almost hear you say that the "old man" is hard-boiled, maybe I am, but there's a practical side to this matrimonial game and it is a pretty good thing to consider seriously before you go into the musical comedy features.

Now let's discuss this thing from a sensible standpoint. This "old and respected family" business is a nice thing, Red, but it will not add a single item to the order you get from the wholesale grocer around the corner: What does she know about sewing buttons on a union suit so you will not have to use up a whole card of safety pins? I've found that knowledge fairly essential in cold weather.

She's an "only child"—a "pet," eh? Well, that's fine, Red. It's nice to know that you will not have a couple of "old maid" sisters-in-law to help you ride range and boss the outfit, but does she show any signs of being ambitious enough to get up at 6:30 A. M. and cook breakfast for you, or do you think you'd have to go around to the Greasy Greek's for your coffee and? Maybe that thought hasn't occurred to you, especially when standing under a Southern Moon when the Zephyrs waft the odor of the Lilacs; but, Boy, the Zephyrs should some day waft the odor of a few pieces of bacon with you on the receiving end in your own dining room, and you'll appreciate that more and more as your pompadour recedes.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

I like that part of your description where you say she's beautiful and accomplished. That means a lot, Boy, but am wondering if you mean it the way I'd like to believe. God never made anything more beautiful than a good woman. She's His Masterpiece, all right—there's no doubt about that, but some folks' idea of beauty is different from mine. The cleverest word painter who ever wrote a massage cream ad, couldn't commence to picture that beauty—that beggars description—that rapturous smile that is born of the very whispering of angels which lights a mother's face when she hears the first cry of her new-born babe. Beauty—why, Boy—the symmetry or form and feature of a Venus pales into insignificance beside it, and the funny thing about it is no one woman, or type, has a corner on it. Of course, you've never dreamed of that example, but it's coming to you, Boy, it's coming to you.

And "accomplished"—well, what do you mean by that? Has she taken a post-graduate course in Victrola lessons, can toddle and sing in Society's amateur "Follies," or do you mean you think she could some day referee a bout between a couple of lusty-lunged seven and ten-year-old boys, croon a lullaby to a nursing baby and keep the Sunday roast from burning, all at the same time? I'll say you want to get one that's "accomplished," but it's a damsite more important to visualize just what they could "accomplish" later, than what has gone before.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Note you say "her old man has oodles of money," but you forgot to mention whether he was a burglar, a politician, or a flat owner—not that there's very much difference, but I was sort of curious. Anyway, as I see it, that's the least important thing in your description. The "old man" may be a decent sort, after all, and may have got it by marriage or from one of Ryan's tips on the stock market, so it may not be his fault. At least, I don't see how that's going to affect you in the least. I know you well enough to know, Red, that you'll never become one of those parasites who, on account of having money in the family, find their most arduous duty the daily airing of a poodle dog on a string—neither can I picture you under any circumstances paying your cigarette bills with other than the coin you had personally earned, so I'm not going to comment on that feature.

Now listen, Red, I expect you think that I've been pretty caustic in the foregoing, and in order to let you win an argument I'll agree; but, Boy, this marriage thing is a more serious problem than you think it is. I appreciate that there are a great many requisites to look for in a wife that I haven't enumerated above. It goes without saying that you will choose eventually a girl fully worthy of you in intelligence, beauty, lineage and what not, but I do want you to come down out of the clouds—realize that there's something more to it than love and kisses and a cottage.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Remember the girl you choose will sit across the table from you for thousands of dinners. She may look awfully good in a party dress, but will she show up as well in a Mother Hubbard with her hair in curl papers? She may make an exquisite Welsh rarebit, but can she brew a real cup of coffee? She may be charming in the receiving line at an afternoon function, but can she build a satisfactory pair of rompers?

I've sort of born down on one feature, Red—I've done so advisedly, because in my opinion the deciding question, after all is said and done, is, "What kind of a mother will she make for my children?" If you can honestly answer that question and give a favorable one, the rest will take care of themselves, Boy—the rest will take care of themselves.

And, after reading this, Red, if the idea should come to you that maybe the "old man" don't know what he's talking about, just stop a minute—pause, Boy, and consider that it took some little picker to choose one who has come up to every one of these qualifications—your Mother! and the other half of the sketch knows that he'll always be proud to sign himself

Your loving

"DAD."

## *The Boy Has Been Bragging a Little*

Dear Hal:

Mother and I have had quite a discussion tonight about your last letter and we've just about come to the conclusion that you're eating too much rooster meat, or something else with similar effect, for your last letter certainly shows that you're getting "cocky." Of course, you may have reason to be, on account of something you're holding back. Maybe Mother and I don't quite appreciate just how important you really are, but anyway the local cigar man hasn't displayed any cigar boxes with your pictures on 'em yet, so we're forced to assume that you're just feeling your oats a bit.

I notice that you've arrived at the place where you complain quite a little about the damphool things the Chicago office writes you about and the asininity of some of their requests and plans. It seems they've insulted your intelligence by questioning some of your moves and that they certainly have had enough experience with you to know that you wouldn't do anything but one way, which, of course, is the right way, and you're getting tired of being bothered with so many bunglers and policies.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Now, Red, if you think that your otherwise good letter is going to kindle a single spark of sympathy in the Old Man, you're just as mistaken as if you'd torn your shirt.

The first thing I wonder about is, just how do you get that way? I suppose you've been working pretty hard, your digestion is bad, or else you've quit smoking or something else has turned up to change the even alto of your way, because the symptoms you are displaying are not at all new to me, or anyone else who has gotten over the college yell days of business life. No—we've all gone thru it, Boy, we've all gone thru it, and the only question in my mind in your case is, will it turn out to be only baby rash, or a genuine case of the measles?

You know, ever since Hector was a pup, pretty nearly every five-fingered snoozer has sometime or other in his life arrived at a place where he thought everything he did was one hundred per cent right and he formed a hundred and five proof pity for the poor unfortunate numskulls who didn't agree with him. It's a sort of childhood disease that has to be gone thru, like mumps, chicken-pox or hog cholera. The majority of the victims recover after a very brief illness and there have been but few cases where it actually killed the victim. However, there are numerous cases on record where it has necessitated an operation to remove the ego and quite a few instances where it has left the victim in such shape

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

that they had to seek out-door employment like ringing up fares on the back platform of a street car, or riding on top of a hansom cab.

Now Mother and I are not very much concerned in your case, because we know you have a rugged constitution that will pull you thru the crisis, but we're wondering if it wouldn't do you a little good to sort of hold up the mirror and let you see just how ludicrous you look to the rest of the world while you're suffering from this malady. Remember how funny you looked when you had the mumps and when you were all broken out with Liberty measles? Well, Boy, if that brought the smiles of the onlookers, your present indisposition makes 'em burst out laughing.

Now listen, Red, your entire trouble can be diagnosed as just a perverted point of view and every time I use that expression I am reminded of a call I once made at a hospital when the nurse and the doctor called me in to get my first peep at a little squirming mite of humanity that afterwards learned to call me Dad. In my enthusiasm and paternal pride, I exclaimed "Some girl" but the doctor just shook his head and said, "No, you're mistaken—a boy." Now Red, I wasn't exactly an idiot. I knew more or less about babies and all that, but the reason the doctor and I didn't agree was purely point of view. He knew, whereas I was only jumping at conclusions.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

But to go back to your symptoms. Of course, I know you're going to tell me where you can point out where you were asked by Chicago to furnish information, or do something that you knew wasn't what they wanted—was nonsensical, etc., and I'll agree with you—now—think a minute! Chicago don't claim to be above errors, mistakes and cases of bad judgment. Of course not, and do you know why they make no such claims? Well, I'll tell you. It's because they've gone thru and gotten over the same illness you have. They know as long as they are dealing with the human equation, errors will creep in, but haven't you noticed, now be honest Red, that they don't jump at conclusions like you do and doesn't it occur to you that if they have found clairvoyance impractical as compared to cold fact, that they will naturally ask more questions, demand clearer explanations and expect you to conduct your end in a more self-explanatory fashion than otherwise?

The trouble with you, Old Top, is that when you get a letter from Chicago requesting a little, simple thing and especially if they don't go to the trouble to explain every reason why they want it, which they shouldn't have to do, you immediately begin to hunt for holes in it. Instead of thinking along the lines of how quick you can comply, you begin to wonder if there's a hidden meaning in it; if they couldn't get the same thing some other place, etc.,

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

and you burn up ten times as much energy and write more letters trying not to do what is wanted than you would if you'd just go about and do it.

You know, Red, when you were a little fellow you had the same symptoms, but I thought you'd out-grow 'em. When you were about nine years old and would do something that I thought you should be disciplined for slightly, I would frequently order you to go over and sit down in a certain chair. After so much hesitation you'd start, but you'd take a circuitous route, knock over the piano bench, kick the cat and eventually, if I kept after you, you'd arrive at the chair designated, but afterward, when in lower mathematics you learned the axiom that the shortest distance between two given points was a straight line, I thought you had gotten over it, but I guess not—eh, what?

Now to make you feel a little better, I'll admit that men higher up than you often get the wrong point of view and I'll illustrate. One time information came to the home office that a certain competitor was putting a special pack on the market in a certain large city, but not letting it be known that it was special by packing it under the same label that they were using all over the country. Naturally, this was important and needed quick investigation. Chicago wired their manager in that city to pick up some samples of that brand and send in immediately.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Chicago didn't go to the trouble to explain their reasons — it wasn't necessary and long telegrams cost money. A few days later they received a letter from this manager which read something like this: "I received your wire asking me to send you samples of Blank's Beans. I cannot understand why you should bother me with a request of this kind when all you'd have to do would be to go into any store in Chicago and buy the same thing, therefore, I am not complying with your request." He even went so far as to send a copy to the Boss expiating on the asininity of the dumb-bell making such a request and, of course, expecting quite a pat on the back for his forethought.

I guess I don't need to finish the story; you can imagine the Golden Text that the Boss thought of after reading the letter, particularly considering that it was his suggestion in the first place.

Now Red, this means only one thing—if you're loyal (and you are) don't look for the holes in every proposition that's put up to you until you arrive at a position where your chief duties are to look for those holes. As long as you're working under someone else, give your superior the benefit of the doubt. He may make some mistakes, but don't be trying to read his mind. Don't get cynical—give the other fellow credit for having a reason for asking what he does. Get out your old yellow copy of Elbert Hubbard's *preachment "The Message to Garcia"* and

**LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN**

**note how that fellow, when given a task, didn't look for the holes in it, or question the motive, but went ahead and did it.**

**There's a lesson in it for you, Boy—get it!**

**Your loving**

**“DAD.”**



## *Dad Warns of the Evil Spirit That Whispers "You Haven't Time"*

Dear Hal:—

Mother and I arrived home without mishap and she said I should write you at once and let you know that we arrived safely and to tell you again how much we appreciated the good time that you showed us on our visit.

Am mighty glad I went to the office with you Saturday and attended your meeting with your salesmen. You were so busy just about the time I had to run away to make my train that I didn't get to tell you several little points that I picked up, but I guess I can tell you just as well in this letter.

You probably noticed that I made it my business to sort of "mill" around with your various men and engage them in conversation. I want to congratulate you on the class of men you have gotten together. They're a credit to you, Boy, and with that bunch of enthusiastic live-wires, I don't think you need to worry a bit about your results just as long as you direct them properly.

There was one thing that struck me very forcibly as I talked to your various salesmen. Every one of

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

them had a great big territory and they freely admitted that they weren't calling on all their prospects; said they didn't have time and they admitted that they picked out the best and biggest prospects where they were pretty sure to land an order and then rushed on to another town and went through the same performance.

Now, Red, I don't blame your men for that condition—I think they are sincere in thinking they are doing just right, particularly because you have so routed them. Neither do I blame you, so all-fired much, because you just haven't given it enough thought so far, but listen—

Years ago, where I was raised, it was a great country for raspberries. As you know, the berry season is a pretty short one and the farmers raising them had to depend to no small extent on hiring a gang of boys just out of school to pick them. All us fellows were pretty anxious about that time of the year to earn a little pocket money and we descended on those berry patches like a swarm of bees. Usually, the days were pretty hot and when night came, we were a pretty tired bunch of Indians and although we worked pretty hard we hadn't earned a great deal for we were paid so much per quart.

One of the boys used to turn in about twice as many berries every day as the rest of us and the farmer used to tell us every night the reason he did so was because he put more berries in the pail than

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

he did in his mouth. Of course, that line of talk was pretty good berry patch repartee, but it set me thinking because I knew I was just as quick as the other fellow; that I worked as hard and I didn't like raspberries anyway, so I knew I wasn't wasting any on the consumer's pack method, so, one night I caught up with the star picker on his way home and asked him for the secret. He looked at me and chuckled and said, "Come on home with me and get my Dad to tell you." This aroused by thirteen year old curiosity, so I went along with him. When we got home we found his father on the back porch and he said, "Dad, tell my pal here what you told me about picking berries."

It happened that this boy's Dad was one of those fellows who knew all about boys, so he didn't answer the question right off, but first began by talking regular boy's lore—all about swimmin' holes, how the fish were bitin', where we'd be liable to find an eagle's nest and a lot of the kind of things boys like us were interested in—you know Red, the kind of a Dad who just had you hanging on to every little thing he said and just making you wish you could go tramping with a Dad like that and the first thing I knew—before I realized it—he had me telling him what success I was having at berry picking.

After I'd described my methods and told him how hard I worked, he said, "Son, now listen to me, for this applies to berry picking as well as lots of other

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

things—when you go into a berry patch, you'll find lots of boys running here and there looking for bushes where the berries grow the thickest. After picking a few minutes they get the idea that a bush a little farther down offers greater possibilities and they run over to it and keep on repeating the performance all day long. When night comes, they are tired out from their exertions and strange to say, they haven't many berries in their pails either. Now the way to do—when you go into a berry patch, stop at the first bush you come to and don't leave it until you've picked every berry—don't run aimlessly from one bush to another, but do as I say and when night comes you'll find you not only will have a full pail many times over, but you will not be so tired, because you haven't expended that energy of yours running around so much. In other words, "stick to your bush, son, stick to your bush."

That's all there is to the story, Red. Suffice to say I took the old boy's advice and sure enough it paid dividends. Now the same thing applies to selling goods. It's human nature for youth especially, to chase rainbows and follow what seems to be the easiest way. When you get out of the bus in a small town, which has four big prospects that you know you can sell right along in a row on Main Street, it's quite natural to go sell 'em and then go to the depot and catch the first train out, but, Red—how about those three little stores way down the other side of

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

the feather factory, about four blocks from the round house? Who is going to sell them? Their credit is good and they'll buy your goods if they get a chance. Of course, I know the argument that the little red devil who sits on your shoulder whispers in your ear — it goes something like this, "I just haven't time; I'd miss that train out; I'll pick the good ones and leave the little ones for my competitor —he has to live, etc." and a thousand such logical (?) arguments, but listen boy—you know and I know that the fellow who listens to those arguments is only kidding himself.

Did you ever sit down Red and analyze a day's work with one of your salesmen? Figure out just how many hours each day he actually spends face to face with a buyer? If you never have, it will surprise you both. Of course, I realize some time must be spent going from store to store, and from town to town, but regardless of that Red, the time you spend facing the buyer is, after all, the only time in the day that is really "productive time"—the balance is "non-productive" and in addition, it's expensive because you cannot make it up—it's gone.

The thinking Sales Manager and Salesman today cannot fail to recognize this, because the man who spends the most hours actually picking berries, gets paid more than the fellow who spends half his time between bushes.

**LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN**

Give my very best to 'em the next time you have them in for a meeting and tell them for me that in selling goods this year, I'd rather be a setter pup that stalks the game, than a humming bird that just dips its nose into what appears to be the sweetest roses.

Your loving

**"DAD."**

## *The Boy Is Given an Unfailing Formula for Landing a Bigger Job*

Dear Hal:

I just put down the evening paper and came very nearly dropping off to sleep when your mother reminded me that I'd better answer your last letter tonight while I had the time and there was no company around.

I think I enjoyed your last letter more than any you've written recently, largely because it breathed a better spirit of optimism over general business conditions and your job in particular and I must say that it was the first letter you have sent me lately in which you were not "crabbing" about something or other.

I'm glad to see those symptoms. For the life of me I cannot see why a big, red-headed galoot like you, with a good job, a superior line of merchandise and a world of possibilities before you would find time to do anything else but figure out ways and means of capitalizing your opportunities to the fullest extent and I really believe you are "rounding to" and if so—if the signs don't fail me—you're just now putting

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

yourself into a correct mental attitude to commence to really grow.

You know, Red, the only real place in life for a "crab" is in the bottom of the restless ocean. Of course, I know they occasionally get out of that sphere, but when they do they generally get gobbled up by some quicker thinking member of either the fish or the human family, so there's really no credit to be gained by trying to pattern after an imitation devil-fish.

I've done a good deal of thinking about that snappy looking bunch of salesmen you've gathered around you, as I mentioned in my last letter, and I've been wondering if you're going to turn out to be a good "picker" of men, or if you just happened to bump up against a kind Providence. I'm going to give you the benefit of the doubt and believe that you selected them carefully, with an eye to the future, but your responsibility has only begun now that you've separated the wheat from the chaff.

Next to trying to build a Ziegfeld chorus with a bunch of knock-kneed runners-up in a cafeteria, I don't know any harder job than trying to make business men and executives out of a bunch of potential baseball fans, pool sharks and dance hounds, but someone has to do it and it's not a colossal task, Boy, if you approach it with the proper amount of tolerance and patience.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Not so long ago, it was my privilege to accidentally meet the directing head of one of the largest industries in this country. As we chatted over our cigars, I inquired to what single thing he attributed the success of his company. He replied quickly, "The exceptional personnel of our organization." Being in an inquisitive mood and finding him a willing—yes—an enthusiastic talker regarding his company, I further inquired the method in training men for higher and more responsible positions in his company. He replied, "Our organization some years back got away from the prehistoric idea that the secrets of each job should be locked in the heart of the man holding it.

"You know, in olden times, men were afraid to teach subordinates for fear they would become so proficient that they would crowd out the one holding the good job. The constant and ever-increasing demand for men qualified to hold the highest positions has generated a feverish anxiety and ambition to train men to take the place of his immediate superior, so that practically every man, from the office boy to the president, is competing with each other to turn out the most and highest caliber experts and executives."

Waxing reminiscent, this great man related how one man in their organization, whose hair was now silvered by many winters, was the "daddy" over a hundred of the bigger men of the company—the man who chose and had trained over a hundred men

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

to be capable of assuming the greater responsibilities of a great industry! Naturally enough our smoking-car conversation carried us to the discussion of just what was the measure of success in the business world and I think you can appreciate that I was not at all surprised to hear this man—this great captain of industry, whose very name in the business world was synonymous with great accomplishments—say with no little show of feeling, “If, when I pass out of active business life, it can truthfully be said of me that I was a builder of men, I crave no greater epitaph.”

Red, that man spake a sermon in one sentence! Boy, the pyramids of Egypt have already been built; man in his wisdom has built skyscrapers, bridged rivers and spanned plains, yet the greatest work of the artisan, the noblest piece of sculpture and the most magnificent monument of the ages is in your hands for fashioning. The organization that you have the honor to be a part of is a breathing, living thing.

If the men who serve under your direction, Red, are not allowed to grow—if their ambition is not aroused to a point where they fit themselves with your help to take your job, or jobs like it, you cannot hope to gain promotion. Leaving out the personal side of it, if yourself and men in similar positions accept your present positions with smug satisfaction and take no part in an effort to be constantly

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

building, the foundation of your house will surely crumble as dry rot and decay sets in and your temple will some day fall upon your head.

And Red, don't be selfish to the point of being afraid of personal handicaps that you might impose on yourself. Your company needs trained branch house managers, district managers, sales managers and other executives. If they choose your right-hand man and leave a hole in your organization, don't grouch about it—don't complain about their having broken up your organization — Good Lord, Boy, what higher compliment could they pay you than to thus acknowledge that they consider you a builder of men? Just start in and train another, for the day you can honestly walk in and tell the Boss that you've trained a man who can fill your place better than you can, he will not waste much time finding a bigger and better job for you, Red.

While I think you're too young to really appreciate the pride one feels in the successes of their own children, you can take it from me it's some feeling and I don't know anything in this world that's so closely akin to it as the satisfaction and genuine pleasure one derives in watching the successes of those men whom you have personally coached in their earlier successes.

Think it over Boy! The duty you owe to your company, or the world at large, isn't at all performed when you have merely achieved personal success—

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

why bless your heart, one graduate from Red's school is worth more to the company than a single sale of the entire output of their largest cannery.

Fate has entrusted to your keeping as likely looking a bunch of youngsters as I've seen in many a day. What are YOU going to do with 'em old Red Top? Are you going to be satisfied with just making good salesmen out of them—are you short-sighted enough to think that's all that's expected of you?

Mother and I were discussing these things the other night and she gradually led me out over my head in the argument. She always goes way back before my time and she did when she said that God made the first man out of a bunch of clay. The only come-back I could think of was, "Gee, what an inspiration that ought to be to Red, considering how much better material he has to work with."

Your loving

"DAD."

## *Hal Is District Manager Now—His Problem Is Winning the Respect of Men*

Dear Hal:

Jim Baker came by the house a few minutes ago and showed me a copy of last week's bulletin in which was the announcement of your promotion to the position of District Manager. Your letter of a few days ago didn't say anything about it, although you must have known at the time. Guess you wanted to surprise your old Dad, eh—what? But you didn't surprise me much after all, for I've been expecting something like that to happen to you for a long time.

Well—Boy—Howdy! I know you're proud of the promotion and I'm sure proud too, but I'm not going to do much back slapping for two reasons. In the first place, it makes your arm tired and the second place, it will not help you a bit to fill a District Manager's shoes. The very fact that you didn't wire me right after the job was given you is a good sign. I'm giving you credit at least for inherited modesty and if I am right in my diagnosis, I'm more proud still for I never knew a big man in my life who wasn't personally modest and I'm happier than I can tell you to think that at the outset you are ex-

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

hibiting the ear marks of the man I'm hoping you are.

No doubt you are full of plans of what you are going to do in the new work and probably don't need any advice from me, but I know that by this time you realize that it's the old man's prerogative to make a few comments in each letter, so I'm not worrying a bit about whether you want them or not.

The position of District Manager is a big one—a whole lot bigger than some think. It's one of those jobs that a fellow can make just about as big as he wants to and, on the other hand, it furnishes an opportunity for a fellow to make about as big a jackass of himself as the proverbial Missouri mule, if you don't watch your step.

In the first place, I hope you haven't acquired the idea that the place was given you because you were the best branch house manager on the force; the seventh son of a seventh son or because they thought you were too big for a branch house manager. Of course, I don't know how they arrived at their conclusion, but if I were you I think I'd figure that probably they were pretty short of District Manager material and just decided to try you out on the job for a few months to see how you'd work out.

Don't get the idea that I'm trying to make light of your ability—far from it. The only reason I'm advising you that way is, I believe that thought on

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

your part would make for a more healthy condition and provide more of an incentive. At any rate, the officials of your company, to all practical purposes, are "from Missouri" and you'll do well not to kid yourself into thinking you have been especially ordained a modern Moses to lead the children of Israel out of the wilderness.

Of course, I know you don't think so, but I want to impress upon you that your new job is no sinecure. Unless you have a perverted sense of what is expected of you, you'll find that your previous positions were child's play in comparison. You have taken upon yourself a world of responsibility that must not be discounted. While you may believe yourself to be popular with the organization under your jurisdiction, it's a hundred-to-one shot that—especially at first—you'll be about as popular as the village drunkard at a Sunday School Picnic. Your managers might have liked you as a brother manager, but it's only natural that they'll accept you only on suspicion until you've demonstrated to them that you're a rudder on the boat instead of a barnacle.

That's your first and biggest job, old Red Top, and if you're smart you'll realize that although the title may carry some prestige, the most important commodity you have to sell at first is—Red. Be sure to differentiate between the class of men you have been directing and those now under your jurisdiction.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Although your managers were once salesmen—they're managers now. Big, broad, clear-thinking, hard-hitting business men. You cannot succeed without their respect and you haven't got that to start with, because you've yet to demonstrate. You cannot buy respect of these men with fancy dinners, too much dignity, funny stories or "old maid" tactics. Your authority of title or position don't mean anything to them. You must be first a "he-man," the happy medium between a "yes-ser" and a chronic debater, an exponent and amplifier of your company's policies, a happy mixture of hard work, tolerance, constructive suggestion and leadership.

Don't hold that respect to be attained lightly—worry about it! If there's a single manager that will not co-operate and the others do, it would look as though it were his fault—not yours, but if six out of the ten are luke-warm after you've been on the job a while, that's a condition and looks like your fault and is plenty big enough to worry about. After you've burned the midnight oil long enough on either of the two cases, you'll probably come to the conclusion that you will sell yourself to that one man, or get rid of him, because a balky manager—a man not in step with the aims of the company—the fellow who doesn't believe in the policies and methods one hundred per cent, is like a rotten apple in a barrel of good ones—if you leave it there long enough, it will have the whole barrel on the garbage wagon. But in the case

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

of the six out of ten who are not working right, it should be obvious that it's another case of "they were all out of step but Jim" so you'd better take yourself off to one side, hold a few star chamber sessions and operate on Red. You're the point of contact, Boy, between the officers and directors and the sales organization.

During the war you heard a lot about morale, and morale is nothing more-or-less than mental attitude —point of view. Yet, morale has overthrown dynasties, won battles and brought success out of failure. The sales battle of your company will not be won unless it is ever-apparent in the salesmen —the salesmen cannot be expected to have it unless their managers believe, with an infinite faith, in the aims, policies and personnel of your institution and those managers cannot be expected to have it unless their point of contact with the dynamos in the power house are capable of carrying the proper voltage with an unbroken current, rather than be merely a broken live-wire that can only sputter, fuss and shock those with whom it comes in contact.

Boy, this has been a rambling letter and I hope the things I've told you will prove entirely unnecessary, but you're just now embarking on an uncharted sea. You'll no doubt run into breakers, squalls and stormy weather, yet, there is bound to be clear sail-

LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

ing ahead of you if you'll be ever alert to stay off the rocks of conceit, leisure and intolerance.

Your loving

"DAD."

P. S.—Am sending you that hat you won on the election bet. You'll note that it's the same size as the last one I bought you.

## *Dad Drops in on a Branch Manager and Finds the Spirit of the Time*

Dear Hal:

I've been reading a great deal recently in the newspapers and magazines, particularly in articles relating to sales problems, about the new order of things with respect to this year rewarding only fighters. In addition to what you say in your letters about your own company's activities, the bulletins and circular letters you have sent me, it seems that every sales talk I listen to, or read, bears down particularly on that very apparent change that has come about in all business in recognizing changed conditions and cutting your expense-cloth according to your result-pattern.

You know, you sent me a copy of a letter not long ago written by the Big Boss himself, in which he said that they did not contemplate reducing their man power, but he said he expected you to do away with all incompetents; have one good man do the work of two mediocre ones and he intimated in no uncertain terms that your company had no use for drones around its bee-hive.

I have been just a little mite curious to get around

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

and see just how literally your organization was taking the instructions so I welcomed the chance that presented itself last week when some business took me out of town for a few days. I happened in a town, Red, in which your company had a branch house (not in your territory, boy, although I wished it were). This was what might be called a baby-branch, in that it has been in operation only a few months. Not having much to do, I dropped around to chat with the manager. The thing that first impressed me was that although it was before eight a. m. they were on the job and working. The next thing I noticed was that they didn't have any surplus office furniture to loll around in. In fact, after I introduced myself and indicated that I was going to stay a few minutes anyway, they had quite a time finding something for me to sit on.

A funny coincidence was, the manager was red-headed and sitting across the desk from him was a red-headed youngster who reminded me a good deal of you when you were his age. As I sat there chatting with the manager, I just couldn't keep my eyes off that boy. Evidently he was office manager, voucher clerk, cashier, chief clerk and everything in the office except the stenographer. The stenographer, by-the-way, was a young man about the same age as the red-head who wasn't bothered about having to powder his nose, fix his back hair, or go to the rest room every twenty minutes like some female stenographers I've heard of.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Both of these chaps were neatly dressed and a credit in appearance to the office. About nine o'clock Red (I'll just have to call him that) said to the stenographer "Come on, boy, let's go" and both of them got up from their desks and went out the door. I didn't think much of that until a few minutes later I heard the clanking of chains and squeaking of pulleys and looking out I saw Red and the stenographer—now dressed in overalls and jumpers—out bringing stock down from the third floor to the shipping floor by means of a chain and pulley.

I questioned the manager and he said their business there so far was small and his entire force was himself and those two boys. It was, of course, obvious that had he a combination warehouseman and shipping clerk he couldn't be kept busy but about half the time, so the work must therefore be done by his present force. I watched those fellows while they brought down some hundred or more cases, stenciled them, piled them neatly on the sidewalk in front awaiting the transfer wagons. When finished they came back in the office, picked up their office work where they left off and went to it. I was so interested in that combination that I made it convenient to stay around there all day—I was afraid there was a joker in it some place and I wanted to see. When the transfer man came Red went out and helped load the goods onto the wagon. He wasn't very big physically—just a boy I tell you—but you should see him get a toe-hold on those pickle barrels.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Why, Strangler Lewis never had a thing on him in his palmiest days—and smile—Red—why doggone it he was actually happy in that job and took just as much interest in his work as if he owned the place.

In talking with the manager he got to explaining the different routes of his salesmen and I noticed on the map that there were several large towns that his salesmen didn't touch. When I asked him specifically about them, he told me he worked them himself and he gave me to understand that he wasn't one of those chair-warming "directors of sales" but a real, red-blooded, hard-hitting he-manager—one who sent in orders in the same mail with his expense account. It was very apparent that in addition to working the trade he also found time to direct his salesmen, answer his correspondence and be all that a branch manager should be.

Red, I walked out of that branch and down the street and do you know what I was thinking of? Well, I'll tell you—do you remember that grand old patriotic picture of the drummer, the fifer and the color bearer, tattered, wounded and bandaged, but with set jaws, courage and determination fairly bristling from them — that picture's called, "The Spirit of '76"? Well, Boy, I couldn't help but think of the similarity of the spirit portrayed in the picture and that evidenced by that two-fisted, working manager with his two combination office-men, stenographer, shipping clerk, and warehouseman.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Now, of course, I suppose you've got men working for you who would say, if you told them about this occurrence, that they thought it was beneath a man's dignity to do the things those fellows did and perhaps they're right in it too, as applied to some places and some conditions. I know all of your managers cannot spend seventy-five per cent of their time out getting orders; I know that office managers, clerks and stenographers cannot be shipping clerks and warehousemen in addition to their other duties, but the big thought I want to get across to you Red, is that here was a place where it not only could be done, but necessary that it should be done if that baby-branch was to get a foot-hold and live, and the beautiful part about it all was, it was done, cheerfully, happily and with a determination to win just like the spirit that was in the minds and hearts of those grand old boys at Valley Forge.

You know, one of the chief duties of a district manager is to be continually on the lookout for good timber—a sort of a scout for the Big League as 'twere. All I have to say is—keep your eye on that combination.

Your loving

“DAD.”

P. S.—I'll bet you a new brown derby that red-headed kid will not be pushing pencils and juggling pickle barrels all his life.



## *The Boy Gets a Chance to See Himself as Others See Him*

Dear Hal:

Mother and I have been sitting out in the porch swing all evening watching the neighborhood youngsters play ball in the street. In the bunch was one red-headed boy, who, of course, reminded me a little of you when you were his age and it was only natural that I got to musing a little over your experiences and problems and I couldn't help wondering just what kind of ball you were now playing.

After the last youngster had heeded the paternal whistle and laid aside his ball and glove for the night, the shouts died down, the street became quiet and Mother and I sat out there in the twilight talking of you—your good points and bad points—your fads, fancies and pet peeves. We fell to discussing your qualifications for this job of district manager that you have had now for some time and wondering if you were finding it possible to control that bombastic, nitro glycerin, TNT disposition of yours, in the face of trying circumstances that I know you have to face daily.

I don't know that I ever told you, but I have had

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

the privilege of knowing and studying different district managers—not in your concern, but in other lines where the problems are somewhat similar. I was telling Mother about some of the species I had met up with in my time and durned if she didn't spring a couple of quotations from the Scriptures (just like Mother, isn't it?) that seemed to fit my line of musing so well that I just thought I'd use 'em for a basis—a sort of Golden Text as 'twere and come in and write you a letter before I forgot what I wanted to say.

The particular district manager I was telling her about at the time, was a fellow whom I was pretty well acquainted with in the old days. He was a bright fellow, one who knew his game about as well as any I ever met and those in power in his company had every reason to expect him to make a big success. He was a good salesman—had more than ordinary knowledge of the fine points of the manufacturing end, had had a broad experience and was a keen analyst.

This man was a likeable chap and had taken more than a correspondence course in diplomacy and tact, so there wasn't anything on the surface that would indicate other than smooth sailing in his job, but the boys on the road who ran onto him frequently, soon began to intimate to their confidants that he wasn't making such a success as it was thought he would.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

One day I got hung up on a big deal where I had to wait over a couple of days before I could get the signature on the dotted line and I accidentally met this chap in the dining room of the hotel one morning. After he found out I had a little time to kill he asked me if I wouldn't like to go with him to call on one of the branches under his jurisdiction. I guess it was curiosity more than anything else that prompted my acceptance of his invitation, but anyway, we went over to the branch in that city and all I had to do was to sit over in a corner of the private office, read a newspaper—or rather pretend to—and watch the wheels go 'round.

The first thing I noticed was a sort of new dignity that he assumed the minute we walked into the office—pleasant enough and smiling as he saluted the manager and clerks, but you know Red, one of those "holier-than-thou" atmospheres seemed to creep into the room like a Lake Michigan fog in late October. Not being familiar with the fine points of the business I wasn't able to get much from the various conversations that I overheard during the day, but I particularly noticed that every once in a while the manager would relate some particularly good thing that had come to pass and invariably the district manager would lean back and say, "Sure, I'm responsible for that!" or "Didn't I tell you how to do that?" or some such comment. Whenever those remarks were made I noticed particularly that the

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

manager's face would sort of lengthen and he apparently bit his lip a time or two, as I surmised, to keep from telling the D. M. that he too should share in the glory.

Several times during the day while the district manager and manager were discussing some problem, various clerks and stenographers would come in for a decision, or deliver some verbal message and it was noticeable beyond mistake that the district manager always answered the question, or handed down the decision, regardless of the fact that the manager was the one usually addressed. Later on in the day in discussing some situations they did not always agree on all points and mild, but healthy, argument arose. In such cases, the district manager invariably raised his voice to a high pitch, to all appearances lost his temper and in effect, brow-beat and bulldozed the poor little manager into an eventual agreement on the point in question.

When we got ready to leave, I know it was more than imagination when I noticed the look of tired relief that came into the eyes of the manager and I couldn't help but feel a deep sympathy for him, because instead of receiving helpful suggestions and counsel, encouragement and intelligent, collaborated analysis, he had only been subjected to ill-concealed egotism and arrogance, had been belittled in the eyes of his subordinates and shouted at like a coolie-laborer on a steamship dock.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

When I came to this place in my narrative, Mother just gazed out over the chimney tops of the homes across the street into the canopy of stars that twinkle over you tonight, the same as they twinkle over us and said, "Well, Red will never be that kind of district manager, because he'll remember that part of the Scriptures that says, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" and again in Proverbs where it says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger."

I didn't have any comeback, Red; I hope Mother's right (she usually is) and I'm not laying any odds on whether you remember the Biblical quotations, but I am willing to vote with her on your being smart enough to keep from assuming that cheap variety of dignity that only looks good on an undertaker; that faculty of self-effacement when it means the strengthening of another's position in the eyes of his subordinates and having the breeding to speak with firmness, but in a low voice, that can only make for respect and withal, a love—if you please—in the hearts of your fellow-workers that is more priceless than empty-sounding titles, fame, or five figures on the salary check.

Your loving

"DAD."



## *Dad Tips Off the Boy to a New Job*

Dear Hal:

I got a letter the other day from an optimistic friend of mine out in the short grass country, where the principal industry is cattle raising. He admitted that, like all other business his particular line had gone through its depression, but I couldn't help but be impressed with his cheerfulness. Among other things, he told me that they had experienced an awful dry spell out his way, but that the cattle business wasn't so bad after all. He seemed to be full of pity for the poor hog raiser, for he said that it had been so dry that the natives had to soak up their hogs by turning water on them before they could get them to hold slop.

Somehow this set me to thinking about your business and having a little spare time on my hands I thought I'd drop down to the main office of your company to renew old acquaintances and to listen to the gossip. When I got down there, the first thing that impressed me was the pruning that had been going on in the office force. I didn't see any strange faces to speak of on my visit, but I noticed the absence of a good many whose duties during the war period were no doubt dignified by the title of First

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

and Second Pencil Sharpener and Envoy Extraordinary to His Flipness, the Office Boy, and other strange and sundry nonessentials that crept into all offices during the period of commercial hysteria that we have been recovering from in the last year.

Everybody had their coats off and were working under high pressure and I had considerable difficulty getting anyone to talk to me. I suppose it was out of respect for the fact that I have a red-headed son on the payroll, that finally got an audience for me with the Boss and we had a very pleasant chat. He told me that business was much better than it had been and took me down past the order desk where the old time activity was beginning to show again. He always takes me into his confidence in illustrating his points and I was particularly impressed by some of the letters from salesman managers that were coming in.

It was really amusing to a fellow like me, Red, who has been out of touch with the present situation to quite an extent, particularly his illustrations of the mental attitude of different managers. The majority of letters he showed me were written in an enthusiastic, optimistic tone and recited the strengthening of the market on certain items and were accompanied by contracts for futures, as well as a spot business, while some few were evidently written by managers who didn't know that the wholesale grocers had taken their last fall sugar

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

losses and were still devoting their time to thinking up fancy alibis for poor business.

After so long a time, we got to talking about you Red, and I suppose he just wanted to tickle an old man's parental pride, but anyway he said some nice things about the way you were getting along. He told me something in confidence that I'm going to tip off to you, although he said you didn't know yet, but am sure he will not mind my telling you. He said that the first of next month you were to be brought into the Chicago office as one of his product sales managers. Just about that time he was called into a meeting and had to tell me good-bye hurriedly and as a result, I didn't get to find out just what job it was, or whether it was permanent, or just a tryout for you, but anyway, I went home walking on air for, regardless of what it is or whether or not it is a promotion, it certainly will be a change of base for you and will add to your already diversified experience.

Now Red, I've spent a lot of time in my life watching the antics (yes—I say that advisedly) of some of these product sales managers and there are several things I want to warn you of before you tackle the job. In the first place, the biggest mistake you could make would be to get the impression that all you had to do was to "direct" the efforts of the organization on the particular items you were following. Of course, you'll have some of that, but if you think you will

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

only have to dictate to a good looking stenographer, you're as mistaken as a republican candidate for alderman in the first ward. And again, if on account of your army experience you imagine you're going to be top sergeant for the general sales manager and let him carry the responsibility you'd better stick pins in your chair and come out of it.

The only excuse for having a product sales manager is that the particular product in question will have a "daddy" in the main office, instead of having to be nurtured a la incubator and grow up like Topsy. Don't think for a minute that the general sales manager is going to do the thinking for you, or lay down a set of instructions for you to follow out. I take it that you're getting more than twelve dollars a week now and if so, they expect you to be "creative" and use that torch-thatched swelling on top of your shoulders for something else beside a hat-rack.

Now get this clear to start with—everything the company manufactures in your line is YOUR product. Yours to sell—it doesn't belong to the factory, the branch house, the jobber, the retailer or the consumer. It's YOURS—the weight of responsibility is on your shoulders from the time it comes out of the retort until the can is peacefully reposing on the breeze-swept side of the hillock in the city dumping-ground. If you think you can sit down and dictate a "pep" letter to managers and salesmen, wave your

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

arms and plant Old Glory rhetorically in the azure blue of the heavens until some temperamental manager becomes so moved by your chin music that he orders a carload—if you think you have then accomplished something worth crowing over, you better go back to calling on the retail trade. Those goods are yours, Red—you've only then started them in the channel of distribution and the REAL WORK for your think-tank has only commenced. You must think up schemes—selling plans—watch stocks and keep them moving—give advice and counsel to your managers—in a word, you must be the dynamo that generates the sell-juice and believe me, it's your job to see there are no broken connections.

There are a lot of things about a product sales manager's job that can be well or poorly done, but I cannot begin to comment on all of them in this letter. Am sorry I didn't get to talk just a few minutes longer to your Boss, for I'm curious to know whether they thought you were so all-fired good at your other job that they gave you this, or whether somebody just left the gate open and you sneaked in.

I haven't told your mother about this yet, so I suggest that you write her a letter and just mention it casual-like. After I get her comments I'll write you some more of my observations, which I imagine you relish about as much as salt in your ice cream.

Your loving  
“DAD.”



## *Dad Gets a Lesson from a Trip to the Farm*

Dear Hal:

Every year about this time I get a sort of han-kerin' for yellow-legged chicken and striped gravy—you know, Red—not the kind you see on the bill-of-fare in the cafes which they jokingly term "spring" chicken, without going on record as to just what spring; not the kind that's cooked all in one piece and tastes like the pet chicken that Grover Cleveland raised when he was in the White House; but rather that old-fashioned, unjointed, juicy, tender, fried-brown country chicken that you're sure first saw the light of day about May 1st, this year.

Well, anyway, Mother and I piled into the old gas buggy last Sunday and went out in the country just in order to satisfy that craving. You know, Red, I never had a particularly strong leaning toward the farm or anything that goes with it, with the exception of an occasional visit made with the sole intent of just gorging myself on the good things to eat that the farmer always seems to find right handy without having to haggle with the grocer over the price. Not that I thought I was better than the farmer—not that I didn't appreciate that he was the backbone of

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

the nation, and this and that and this and that, but somehow or other I just never did fall for those poetic rhapsodies and popular songs that usually tell in a high falsetto how dear the old meadow and pigpen were to the heart of a prodigal son. You know I always had the secret hunch that all of that patter was mostly bunk and was written only for commercial purpose to be sold to and raved over by some little mouse of a shop-girl that was trying to carve out a career as a counter-jumper in a department-store basement or by some lonesome hick that had come into the city expecting to conquer it and Cook County in three months and was having trouble to rustle shoes for himself on his salary as a bus boy in a one-arm chair feed-bag oasis.

I have made the mistake of looking on the farm as a sort of necessary evil where they just put the seed in the ground every spring and then let nature do its worst and the reason I didn't wake up sooner was because I'd been stopping too much at these near-farms where they advertise chicken dinners for two dollars and have an electric piano and a toddle parlor just back of the dining room.

On the way down to the place I was going, I drove up to a pretty likely looking farm with a big red barn and went in. It was a fancy stock farm and much to my surprise they had electric lights, radiators and an electric fan over each stall. They had some blooded cows in there that they milked four times a day—the attendants were all dressed in

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

white like barbers in a loop shop and the only thing that was missing was the blonde manicurist. Even the pigs were washed and primped up and the thing that struck me so funny was that the manager in his conversation actually showed that by running it that way, it paid dividends on the investment. To make a long story short, I went along on my journey impressed with the fact that the fellow who ran that place wasn't just indulging a fad or hobby but rather was making a success because of brains and because he knew his business. That started me thinking and when I arrived at the farm that had agreed to feed me for a day I was viewing things in a new light.

When I stretched out on the cool back porch after a meal that can be gotten only on a real farm—out there where the very sky seems to come a little closer, where the traffic officer's whistle would be sacrilegious and the smell of burning gasoline was only a memory—I fell to talking business with my host. I found that I had this farmer business all wrong. True, it was a hard life and a gamble with the elements; true, the price of farm products had been taking a merry toboggan; but I found a spirit of optimism—a studied forgetfulness of the drab part of it—a highly scientific and intelligent working out of a problem that formerly I had guessed was only happenstance. My host had a reason for planting corn on the north eighty and oats on the east quarter. The rations for his live stock were as care-

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

fully planned as the contents of a baby's nursing bottle. In a word—he knew his business and as a result these minor factors of price declines and other annoyances were only an incident in the successful carrying out of a well defined plan.

Naturally, Red, I got to thinking of you and your work and I wondered if you were thoroughly impressed with the necessity of your knowing your business as you have never known it before. I wondered if you could tell the Boss if he asked you right quick the price your competitor was getting for every one of the staple products in your line. I wondered if you had a good knowledge of which branches had too big a stock of certain items and just what you were really doing to change that situation. I wondered if you considered your slow stock report—your Bible—and the thing to really worry over. I wondered if you knew how much the plants had of your product—just how it was moving and just when you should recommend a packing order, and then if such recommendation were made whether it were based on it being the time of the year when the raw material was the most reasonable.

I wondered if you appreciated that the successful marketing of your own product rested largely on your shoulders—yours for the planting—yours to generate enthusiasm over—yours to be posted on as no one else in the organization.

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Coming home that night I was telling Mother of the lessons that the day had taught. I asked her if she thought that even you might not glean a lesson from the farmer. It was funny, Red, to hear her. I don't know why except that to her, like all mothers, you're still just her baby boy—either that, or else you've been practicing your salesmanship on her, for she thinks that you're 'way ahead of me on the things I've been wondering about you. She actually believes that you could take the man that first packed food in cans and teach him something. Of course I didn't argue with her because I never won an argument with Mother, but I just made up my mind that I'd drop you a little note and tell you that if you didn't put the old one-two on the jaw of that problem of yours by being the best posted man on your line in the whole office, that it was going to make a serious dent in the confidence of

Your loving

"DAD."

P. S. The only pessimist I found on the farm, Red, was a bull-frog that croaked at night in the creek. He reminded me of a certain type of salesman—he didn't sell anybody anything.



## *Dad Takes an Interest in the Boy's Big Sales Contest*

Dear Hal:

Since you have been sending me copies of all the circulars and bulletins gotten out by the General Sales department, as well as your own department, I have been kept pretty well informed as to what your firm was doing and planning to do and I don't mind telling you that I'm as interested as a kid on December twenty-third, in this latest stunt you're pulling—this national convention of leader salesmen campaign.

There are several inferences that I draw from the literature that's been put out on it so far and I think I see some angles to it that may have escaped you and I figure you might be interested in just how this all looks to an innocent bystander such as myself, so I'm going to exercise my prerogative of commenting copiously, as 'twere.

Before you get ready to tell me to keep my comments to myself, I want to tell you about an introduction I once had to a brother knight of the grip. It was in my early days of order-teasing that I met up with a prune peddler on my territory by the

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

name of George Shifflett. George was one of those typical grocery salesmen of the old school. Happy, well formed, jovial, a hale fellow well met, fairly radiating good fellowship and, at the same time, a salesman plus. I was called in to a strange city, and before going I told George about it and mentioned that time would perhaps hang rather heavily on my hands. George sat down and wrote a little note of introduction to a friend of his, whom he said would give me an entree to anything and everything in that town. Although the letter was not sealed, I didn't think to read it, but as soon as I arrived I hunted up George's friend and presented my credentials.

His friend was also a peddler of the George type. He immediately opened up the letter and this is what it said: "This is my friend—treat him kindly and often." Just how well George's friend obeyed this admonition is neither here nor there, and there's no use rubbing it in by referring to the customs of ancient times, suffice to say that the only point in the story in connection with my relations with you is that in the comments I am continually making on your business, I am merely trying to treat you "Kindly and often"—not in the way George's friend treated me, but I hope in a more beneficial and less bibulous manner.

But, to get down to this leader salesmen campaign—I naturally begin first to look for holes in such a plan, having gone through a good many cam-

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

paigns myself, but for the life of me I cannot find any in your plan. It's about the finest thing I've ever seen. You know the trouble with most national campaigns is that you have one house, or one bunch of salesmen, competing with another on a product on which the selling conditions vary greatly, one part of the country with another. But, in this one the salesmen merely compete with the salesmen at the local branch, in an effort to determine just what man in each class is the better salesman on a fairly wide line of products. I cannot think of anything that would create more rivalry among your salesmen than your plans, for the convention program that is laid out is both recreative and educational and the big point that I'm sure will not be overlooked by the men is the opportunity it affords the winners to become better and more personally acquainted with the men who direct their movements and destinies.

You know, when I used to be a salesman I looked on the Chicago office as being only just a little lower than the pearly gates—almost as unattainable and a place that could only be reached in the way of a visit by the manager and an occasional special salesman. I wondered how I could ever be picked for a better job when the fellows who do the picking had never seen me. It took me quite a while to break into that holy of holies, and as I look back at it now, it seems I must have had a lucky star for I finally

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

got in, but I had to wait a good many years and I didn't have the opportunity to win an introduction such as is planned for the winning leader salesmen in your campaign.

Now Red, listen to me—the success of this campaign doesn't depend entirely on the amount of enthusiasm that your department sales manager and the branch house managers generate. Not at all—they'll have the enthusiasm in sufficient quantity all right—just leave that to the managers and salesmen.

This campaign will be won by one thing—plans—Red, that's the word—plans. No salesman is going to kid himself into winning this campaign. The fellow who wins will be the chap who first realizes that there has been a change come over business in the last few weeks. He'll have a good idea of just who he's gunning for and his list will include every merchant that has hinges on his door. He'll have samples and selling arguments on each of the campaign items and he'll not make the mistake of underestimating the amount of goods that it's possible to sell each customer. Last, but not least, for the full length of the campaign he'll be up in the morning before the proverbial rooster has a chance to crow, and like the sign in the drug store window, he'll "work while you sleep."

Red, it's your job to lead. Are you giving those boys the suggestions and selling arguments that it's your place to supply? You know the finest compli-

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

ment that can be paid you at the convention is to have not one, but several of those snappy winners slide up to you and tell you just how much help you really gave in those plans.

Now, don't give me the "busy signal." Of course, you're busy—why shouldn't you be, but listen Red—this campaign is the most important thing that your company is putting on this year—make it your first and most important duty—lead 'em, Red, lead 'em!

You know, boy, every time I think of your job and your problems, I'm reminded of the difference between a real live salesman in a clothing store and one of the wax dummies in the window of that same store. Both are salesmen after a fashion, and the poor wax dummy that sits behind the plate glass all day is doing his best and helping to sell goods in a measure, but Red, you never bought a suit of clothes of one of 'em in your life, now did you? No, you bet you didn't, but the boy with the Elgin movement and the snappy sales argument, behind the counter teased many an order away from you, now didn't he? All right—now the thought I'd like to leave with you just before I take off my shoes and make a midnight raid on the ice-box is:

That department sales manager chair that you're sitting in was never intended for the outer casing of a mummy—shake 'em up, Red, and make it snappy!

Your loving "DAD."



## *Dad Surrenders When the Boy Lands the Big Job*

Dear Hal:

For once in my life, I confess to you that I'm starting a letter that I don't know how to write.

Mother and I just finished reading your telegram that announced you had just been made general sales manager of your company. While it was not so much of a surprise in one way—it has been a long while since you received your last promotion and naturally we knew you would not be satisfied until you had climbed even further up the ladder—still, I am somehow differently impressed with this last elevation of yours than I have with your previous steps.

I don't know how I could better illustrate my feeling than to say that when you were a little fellow about ten I started in to give you what I thought at the time was training in the fundamentals of the different stages of boyhood. I can look back now and see where I used to hold myself up to you as a sort of example. Yes, I'll admit now that I used to paint the Old Man as being quite some fellow in his youth. While you seemed impressed from year

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

to year as the so-called schooling progressed and were interested in my teachings, I realized finally when your voice began to change and a peach-skin fuzz began to form on your upper-lip that you weren't a little boy any more. Altho I recognized your growth, not until your twenty-first birthday did I realize that I must needs pursue a different plan, for lo—my once little lad had suddenly grown to manhood and if you'll remember I ceased advising you against the pitfalls that the boy must guard against and began talking he-man language from then on.

Similarly, from the time you started as a salesman for your company, until the present, I have taken a keen delight in listening—sometimes with a good deal of patience, but withal a great relish—to your trials and problems as they came to you along the same old road that I myself had traveled and I kidded myself into thinking, at least, that probably I was doing you some good by tearing pages from my experience in the past and applying them to your problems, and I never realized until just tonight that like the other experience, I had been so busy being a pal of yours that momentarily your gradual growth had escaped me and I must now look upon you in a new light—as being the equal, if not the superior, in experience, knowledge and acumen of the Old Man who's tried to tutor you along the way.

General sales manager — Well, Boy, Howdy! My hat is off to you, Red, with a couple of Salaams!

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

Needless to say, I knew you'd get there and again, needless to say I know you'll fill the chair.

Just for tonight, Red, now listen—just for tonight I'm going to forget momentarily your title and lapse into the old vein. After this, if you insist, I'll call you Mister Red, or any other title you wish, but I just cannot resist the temptation of still imagining you to be the same old impetuous, impulsive, don't give-a-dam Redhead who used to put wrinkles into my forehead, and I'm going to talk to you accordingly.

No, I never was a general sales manager, but I know all about how the job should be run, just like Harry Sparks knows all about raising babies—he never had any. Red, did you ever see that play, "If I Were King"? No? Well, neither did I, but I imagine it's something like the way I'm looking at this new job of yours. I can well imagine your feelings, anyway — especially these first few days after your appointment.

I know you're leaning over backwards trying to act natural in this new job of yours. Every fellow who comes up to wish you well you sort of look over mentally and wonder if his good wishes have a real kick, or if they're about one-half of one percent. You are painfully aware that there are those in the organization who think you have a horse-shoe in your hip pocket, while others wonder just how you got that way. One minute you won-

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

der if you look and act so that no one could suspect a swelling of your hat rest and the next moment you're wondering if the Boss doesn't wonder if you're sufficiently dignified for the place. All-in-all, Old Top, I'll bet you're in a peculiar state of mind and will remain so until the odor of mothballs and the price tag wears off.

But, Red—forget it! You know they say that good prize-fighters, or the best artists on the stage are those who are totally oblivious to either boos or applause, and forget their audience in the intensity of their art. You've been handed a real job this time and you should have neither the time, nor inclination, to do other than put all your energy and ability into it. Simply because it's a big job, don't think for a minute that you will not continue to run afoul of some things that will make that old red-headed temper of yours assert itself, but, Boy, you'll have to handle it differently than in the old days.

You have heard how certain supposedly big men when irritated used to chew up lead pencils, turn over the desk and go thru divers forms of brainstorms, but no, Red — that's fiction — they're not doing it that way this summer. Do you remember the illustration I gave you one time years ago when you got all "het up" because a barber had made a positive appointment with you when you were in a hurry to catch a train and then broke it, so you had to let the old brush-pile stay on? Remem-

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

ber, I told you never to get mad at a man who was below you in intelligence and if that fellow had any intelligence he wouldn't have been a barber? Well, Red, the old rule will work in the new job—always let the other fellow do the getting-mad thing; when he does, he'll make a fool of himself; if you get mad, too, you're getting down to his level.

Stick to the sales end, Red, as long as you're in it, at least. Don't worry about how poorly the men in the other ends of the business handle their duties. God in all his infinite wisdom has never yet produced a genus homo who was capable of personally directing the manufacturing, selling, advertising and executive ends of any one business. True, the president of companies like yours does those things, but not alone, Boy, not alone. He has a lot of high-class men like yourself specializing and directing certain ends of it. Don't be too big, however, to detect a good idea or suggestion from those in other ends of the business. I once knew a great sales manager who got the best sales lead of his experience from an office boy.

And, Red, be human—keep away from the clouds—keep your feet on terra firma. From the time of the Man of Galilee who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," great men of all ages and walks of life have realized that true greatness was marked by humility. Have time, Boy, to listen to

## LETTERS FROM AN OLD TIME SALESMAN

the story of a problem solved that the junior clerk in the department is just aching to tell you, and, Red, like the other jobs you have held, be a leader. Now more than ever before must you, by example and precept, be a real leader of those you captain.

Much of your success will depend upon those with whom you surround yourself. Be ultra conservative in your selection. It may not have occurred to you, but in choosing you for the big job those who had your selection in their power observed pretty carefully whether or not you had character. Character is the solid foundation of all success; without it no great heights can be reached and kept.

Boy, I could go on indefinitely, but I must close. Even now, as the realization of your present age and particularly your position strikes me anew, I feel a sense of awe. I will not write you this way any more—I'm done. Henceforth, my letters will be postscripts on the bottom of Mother's and will only tell of my adventures chasing a little white ball around a cow pasture. The mantle has fallen on your broad and worthy shoulders—instead of my telling you what to do, I'm resigned to have you give me the post-graduate course, for as Kipling says:

"Tho I've belted you and flayed you,  
By the livin' Gawd that made you  
You're a better man than I am, Gunga  
Din."

Your loving

"DAD."









FEB 28 1938

